

# OREVER INDIA

G. VENKATACHALAM

*FOREVER INDIA*

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G. VENKATACHALAM

# FOREVER INDIA

Introduction by
SVETOSLAV ROERICH



*with a frontispiece in colour
and fifty two illustrations*

NALANDA PUBLICATIONS
BOMBAY 1

NALANDA PUBLICATION COY.,
Vasanta Kutir, Race Course Road,
BARODA





Printed by G. G. Pathare at the Popular Printing Press, 35, Tardeo Road, Bombay 7, and published by Utsava Parikh, Nalanda Publications Company, Race Course Road, Baroda. Baroda, Government Order No. (D)49/43: 1-11-47

TO THE MEMORY OF

THE GREAT LITTLE MAN

**MAHATMA GANDHI**

WHO IN HIS LIFE AND TEACHINGS
SYMBOLISED THE SOUL & SPIRIT OF

"FOREVER INDIA"

FROM THE AUTHOR AND PUBLISHERS

# FOREWORD

My book "The Travel Diary of an Art Student" was first published in 1932 and has long been out of print. It dealt with some of the world-famous historic monuments of India, Ceylon and Java, and was not illustrated. Some of the chapters describing the architectural and sculptural masterpieces of India in that book are reprinted in this, with additional ones on Taksashila, Kapilavastu, Kusinagara, Kanchi, Kanyakumari and other places.

"Forever India" is not merely an introduction to the physical remains of the ancient cities of India but to the immortal spirit embodied in the art and culture of this ancient land. To know India is to know something of the eternal in life and art.

G. V.

August 1948.

# INTRODUCTION

In his new book on India the distinguished author and art critic G. Venkatachalam takes us across this vast subcontinent in a series of fascinating essays written with all the charm of his own personal approach full of valuable facts and yet with great poetic beauty.

His style has the directness and freshness of a simple narrative and never fails to hold the attention of the reader even while dealing with detailed facts. The subject is so well assimilated that one feels a continuity of purpose throughout this lucid account of his own travels, researches and musings. The author's never waning enthusiasm, erudition and boundless energy and above all a great understanding and sympathetic approach reflects from the pages of this book and renders the book especially precious to all lovers of India, to all lovers of the Beautiful.

Like a true guide, philosopher and friend he unfolds before us a glorious India from the Himalayas to Kanyakumri, from the ancient civilization down to the great historic periods.

He very appropriately chooses the Himalayas as the opening chapter. Himalayas—Himavat—The Great Crown of India, the birthplace of her Great Thought, the source of her life-giving rivers, the origin and inspiration of so many arts and traditions.

What other country can provide such a kaleidoscopic richness of accumulations with such infinite variety of natural beauty, an almost endless pageant of races and cultures?

As our knowledge of India progresses many of our present day theories on art migration and influences will have to be undoubtedly revised and we shall be able to trace with greater accuracy the various origins and factors that were at work. Successive waves of artistic and cultural influences will reveal to us a great many of these at present missing links.

With greater certainty and accuracy we shall be able to follow the intricate furrows that carried the seeds sown in the distant past and we shall behold an even richer aspect of that wonderful storehouse of every type of accumulations which this sub-continent is.

Yet, however much our knowledge may progress, however precise our researches on origins or details may become above all details, above everything, there will always stand that great cumulative concept of "Bharata" with all her magnificent pageantry of endless variety and beauty.

How truly beautiful is this concept of India in all its infinite manifestations and offerings!....

The land where the great Rishis formulated their lofty philosophies, the land where Lord Buddha preached and lived, the land of great kings, great poets, artists and heroes......

These treasures of India's past are enshrined in a glorious frame of India's natural beauty...... Like an infinite mosaic of precious stones in their most intricate patterns unfolds India before the gaze of a true student and seeker of Beauty.

From the mighty glaciers of the Himavat, from the towering summits of the world's highest peaks to the sacred delicate lace of the foaming waves of Kanyakumari—through India's verdant plains to the solemn Girnar, with the hot scorching sun on barren rocks and the multihued earths of India with the flowering trees of the tangled jungles filling the stilled sultry nights with their wonderous perfumes, the thundering cascades of waterfalls breaking into myriads of rainbows that seem imprisoned in the flashing colours of butterfly wings.

Every facet of natural beauty can be found in and contributed to India's culture and nurtured her arts and her thought.

Where else can we find such an infinite variety of every conceivable colour, form or concept!

To travel in and to know India is to enrich one's life and fill it with a new meaning. To everyone who really knew

India, India always held a special significance—the significance of an inexhaustible repositary of every type of beauty and transcendental thought.

In these words my father thought of India when on one of his many travels in Central Asia:—

"Whether we think of those sublime temples of Southern India, of the grandeur of Chittoor and Gwalior and the great strongholds of Rajputana or of the solemn spirit of the Himalayas, everywhere we shall find the joy of Great Thought. On the moonlit Ganges, in the mystery of Benares seen at night and in the great cadences of the Himalayan waterfalls, we find the same lofty sense of joy.

In the repetition of such ancient names as Manu, Rama, Vyasa, Arjuna, Krishna, of the Pandavas, Rishis, Heroes, Creators and Great Constructors, we recognise a loving respect for the past.

From the Mother of the World, from the Queen of Peace, we receive this delicate flower-like joy of the heart.

Marvellous India, resplendent in outer Beauty, Most Beautiful in her secret Inner Life,...... Beautiful beloved India......"

I know we shall all feel grateful to Mr. G. Venkatachalam for these fascinating chapters and I hope they will awaken in the readers a desire to know more about India, to see more of her natural beauty and to learn more of her cultural heritage.

SVETOSLAV ROERICH.

10th Aug. 1948.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Publishers' thanks are due to the following for their valuable help in lending their photographs and illustrations for the book:

Department of Archaeology, Government of India; Indian States Railways; V. P. Bhatt; Shanti Gujar; Fr. Heras; Subodh Chandra; Marg Magazine; R. Moorty; Nalawalla; Peszkowski; Sternbach; Abhay Khatau; K. K. Hebbar; S. Roerich; Navin Gandhi, and Wayne M. Hartwell.

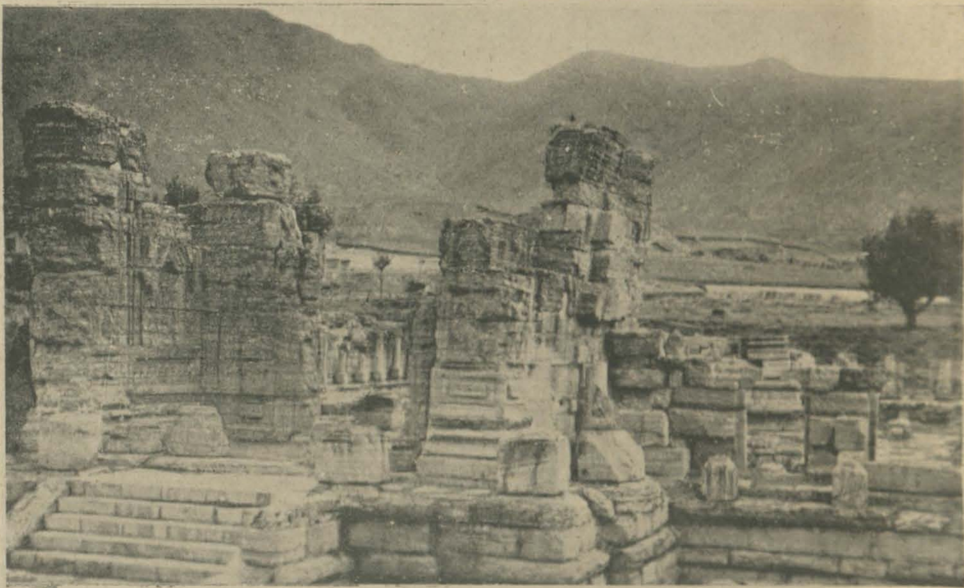
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*Avalokiteshwara* *Archeological Dept.*



*Martand Temple—Kashmir*

## *BEHOLD THE HIMALAYA*

HIMALAYA! Himachal! Himavat! Few names conjure up before one's mind such visions of beauty, purity, majesty and sublimity, and bring to one's heart such thrills of joy, wonder, adoration and mystery as these. The Himalayas are not merely the mightiest mountain-ranges in the world but are intimately associated with the religious and cultural life of the Indian people; they are not only the birthplace of life-giving rivers and sacred lakes but abodes of gods, *rishis*, shrines, *thirthas* and *ashramas*. They have for ages influenced the thoughts and ideals of the Hindu mind and subtly moulded the arts of ancient Aryavarta.

They stand as the material manifestation of the highest spiritual aspiration of man; as a physical symbol of supreme strength, nobility and serenity. They challenge the highest and the best in man, whether while attempting to scale their steepest peaks or while seated rapt in deep meditation amidst their sublime environment, and thereby releasing the hidden qualities in human nature. The gods we seek vainly in gilded temples and with the aid of cunning priests and meaningless ceremonies seem to dwell in those lofty regions and inspire us with their invisible presence; the pleasures that we enjoy amidst the marble palaces and in the throngs of crowded men and women are as nothing when compared with the happiness that we feel in the stillness of these silences and the sublimity of these surroundings.

To see the Himalayas in their full glory is to experience a mighty reality in life; and to roam about their forest-clad slopes, snow-covered fields, alpine-meadowed glades, pine-clad paths, narrow ravines, deep gorges and

yawning abysses is a joy sweeter than that of the fabled Indra's Court. The steep winding path on the mountain side, the cool morning air of the sun-lit tops, the single tree, deep-rooted, braving all the furies of heaven, the clear wide vision of the horizon, the sky-piercing peaks—all these have a meaning and message to the deepest within us. It is the call of Eternity to Time.

The Himalaya of the geography books is a fragment of the real Himalayas. In fact, a complete geography of these great mountains remains yet to be written. The long 1,800 miles of mountain wall that runs west to east to the north of India with the well-known peaks of Everest, Kinchenjunga, Dhawalgiri, Nanda Devi, Nanga Parbat and others is generally taken for the Himalaya proper, while the real Himalayas include five such long ranges of mountains running parallel to one another, including the Trans-Himalaya and the Karakoram ranges. Tibet, mysterious, lama-ridden, the land of Tsang-ko-Pa, Padma Sambhava, Taranath, Tashi and Dalai Lamas, nestles within their broad bosom. The holy lake of Manasarovar and the sacred Mount Kailas, the untrodden glaciers that feed the sources of the Indus and the Brahmaputra, all these are within their sheltering walls.

What immensity of snow-covered and blizzard-blown lands they cover! What wondrous valleys and expansive lakes they hold! What variety of fauna and flora they grow! What interesting humanity and what types of faiths they contain! And what mystery surrounds their unscaled peaks and hidden ravines! Here are to be seen the world's highest peaks, deepest valleys, broadest lakes, biggest glaciers, thickest forests, bleakest lands, secretest monasteries, dirtiest priests and grossest superstitions. Here also are to be seen some of the subtlest of theologians and metaphysicians, some of the cleverest of monks and magicians, and some of the finest work of arts and

literature. This is the region of the swift-footed Barasing, the strong-limbed Balu, the migrating white geese, the heavy-footed yak, prayer-wheels and hardy nomadic tribes. The Himalaya is and will always remain the fascinating land for the explorer and the philosopher.

Many paths lead into the interior of the Himalayas from the plains of India, some trade-routes, some pilgrim-paths, and some secret passes known only to the lamas, gossains and sanyasins. The road from Kashmir over the Jojila Pass through Leh and Ladakh and the steppes of Chang Chang is the westernmost entry both to Tibet and the Trans-Himalaya, and is one often sought by the European travellers and explorers. The Hindustan-Tibetan route from Simla to Shigatze along the Sutlej Valley through Narkanda, Rampur, and Poo is another of the favourite roads for visitors and traders. The pilgrim pathway leading from Haridwar over the Mussoorie hill-station and along the river Alakananda and through the towns of Uttra-Kashi, Kedarnath, Gangotri is one often resorted to by pious pilgrims. There are other routes through the Kulu valley, the Garwhal hills, Almora, Nanda Devi, and Nepal, but the best known and the most important of all the roads is the Darjeeling-Lhassa road, over Bhutan and Gyangtse, a trade as well as a pilgrim route.

This way the Dalai Lama made his escape from Lhassa to Calcutta, and over this road Lord Curzon sent his expeditionary force to frighten the Tibetans who were shot down like so many snipe. Over this way, perhaps, (who knows?) came the first Chinese pilgrim who carried the first Buddhist scriptures to China on the back of a white horse which resulted in Buddhism being introduced into that country. Even today it is the main road to Tibet and China, and the main telegraphic communication between India and Lhassa runs over this

way.

The beauty and glory of the Himalayas can be seen and admired from many a vantage-ground that lies on these various paths. The magnificent view that one gets of these glorious ranges from the popular hill-stations like Murree, Simla, Naini Tal, Almora, Mussoorie and Darjeeling are as nothing when compared with the soul-moving vistas that one glimpses from some of the mountain-saddles and passes that lead into the interior. What a sea of hills! What glorious mountainscapes! What verdant valleys! What sunlit slopes! What joyous creation! What ecstasy of experience! And what realization of Cosmic Beauty!

The first sight of Kinchenjunga from Observatory Hill, Darjeeling, on a clear cool morning before sunrise is an unforgettable aesthetic experience almost amounting to spiritual upliftment. There, before us, shines in dazzling splendour the calm, chaste, virgin Goddess of the Snows, arrayed in spotless pure white garments, her feet in the dark valleys below and her head crowned with an aureole of golden glory, touched by the first rays of the rising sun. The grey mists below seem like thick incense offerings by invisible hands and the glowing glaciers on the slopes seem like flickering lamps that have burnt out their oil.

Suddenly the whole face is lit up by the morning sun and there is laughter of light everywhere as if some unseen worshippers were burning camphor *arati* before the mountain goddess. What a solemn ritual! And how insignificant man seem before this gorgeous sacrament! There are days when thick veils of vaporous cloud rise before the mountain, like a heavy curtain held by invisible hands, and gradually the mists descend down, revealing the glory of Kinchenjunga bit by bit, as if unveiling the secrets of some great mystery. Kinchenjunga, at

sunset, is inexpressibly wonderful, and the play of colours on the peaks and on the surrounding snow-slopes, from grey to white, white to pink, pink to blue, blue to purple, is magical in its effects. The burning glow on the snows is like molten gold and the five peaks with their shoulders look like a fairy castle of burnished brass and beaten gold with high silvery ramparts.

Your mind visualises many imageries of the changing phenomena, while your soul communes with the spirit of this unveiled splendour. And what a stupendous, albeit partial and momentary, experience of "the White Radiance of Eternity," "the Absolute Bliss of *Nirvana*," "the merging of the dewdrop into the shining sea"!

## *IN THE VALLEY OF THE GODS*

NARKANDA is a small Himalayan village on the Hindustan-Tibet road. It lies nestled on a saddle of the Bhagi forest, nine thousand feet above the sea level. It is the last out-post of civilisation on that route with a post and telegraph office and a commodious dak bungalow, commanding a magnificent view of a long range of snow mountains.

To your left descends the narrow pathway that leads to the world-famous orchards of the Kulu Valley through the Sutlej gorge. The Sutlej itself seems a strip of white ribbon laid along a purple ravine.

The road to the right cuts through the Bhagi forest and passing by the terraced villages of Thanadar and Kotgarh reaches the Sutlej on its long journey to Tibet via Rampur, Kanum and Poo. This is one of the major routes connecting the plains of India with the tablelands of Tibet.

On this road come merchants from the far off Yarkand and Kashgar carrying their wares on the backs of yaks and ponies; on this road return travellers and explorers from central Tibet after adventurous journeys to Kailas, Manosarovar and the source of the Indus.

On this road you meet too Missionaries and Governors, Sikh Sardars and Pahari peasants. The hill capital of India, Simla, is only four padau journey from here, forty miles as a crow flies. The names of Fagu, Theog, Mattiana are only too familiar to Kipling's admirers. They are rest places for Simla shikaris and Tibetan traders.

Autumn at Narkanda is indescribably beautiful. The monsoon rains, just passed over, have given an added freshness and greenness to the surroundings. The thick

pine forests that mantle the slopes and shoulders of the hills all around are just patches of colours, like an Impressionist painting, masses of dark-green and silver-white, gorgeous in their effects.

Wafted by the gentle breeze from the valley their tops nod and sway with the rhythm and roar of the sea waves on a rocky beach or those of a distant waterfall in a tropical forest, one of nature's overtones. The moaning wind, at times, bears on its invisible wings mournful melodies of mountains in travail, weird and uncanny in its plaintive cry.

Himalayan bears roam unafraid in their dark depths. Birds flit and fly, soar and sing, in the cool recesses of their thickly-leaved branches, almost an invisible chorus of mirthful melody-makers. Tiny mountain streams and lovely lace-like cascades tumbling over pebbles and rocks, and crickets and beetles screeching and shrieking for what they are worth, all these add to the harmony of nature's unheard melodies. But over and above all these is the great silence of the solitude which is sweeter than all the heard ones.

We have been "afooting" this part of the Himalaya, just three of us, a professor, a poet and the writer of this story, and discovering this ideal mountain retreat we decided to camp and study the Pahari life at close quarters. The professor was a botanist to whom a shy flower peeping behind a rock-crevice is much more alluring and interesting than all the beauty and majesty of the mighty Himalayas.

The poet was a bird-fancier, in more senses than one, and he evinced keener interest in the female of the species of every kind than in men, mountains or monuments. I was, ofcourse, the dilettante of the party, attracted by everything but interested in nothing.

We were sunning ourselves one fine morning on the

pine-needle beds of a forest close by, gazing into nothing in particular, thinking about nothing, dreaming nothing, when we were startled by the sound of flute from the hidden valley below. It was a plaintive cry, sad and soft, like the startled cry of a bird from its nest or that of a soul in unutterable anguish. Mountain music has a sadness all its own, a mood melancholic enough, but this one was sadder and yet serenely sweet. It was unearthly and yet intensely human.

Wafted by a gentle wind it came leaving a trail of silvery sound behind—so it seemed. It was not the ordinary flute sound one hears in the plains; it had nothing of the "art" touch about it and, at the same time, it was not unnatural either. It was nearest to pure sound that one could imagine and came with the magic mood of a half remembered dream. It thrilled us; at any rate, it thrilled me in that deep silence and loneliness of a Himalayan valley.

Few things have stirred me to such an ecstasy of delight as this in my ne'er-do-well but nevertheless rich and romantic life. My first glimpse of the Kinchenjunga from Darjeeling just before the dawn; the gorgeous sunrise as seen from the top of Adam's Peak in Lanka; the lovely vision of the Fujiyama through drifting clouds from a flying plane; the veena-voice of a valued friend from a radio on a moon-lit mountain-top; the tilt of the head of one of the frescoed figures at Ajanta; the perfect profile and the soft smile of a Sivakami bronze in a South Indian temple; the virgin innocence of a village maid who revealed the strength of her soul in her coal-black eyes, these are some of the greatly cherished memories of my travel life. Beauty has ever been my adventure.

The flute sound faded away as mysteriously as it came leaving a haunting memory in our minds and a secret longing in our hearts. To track the sound to its

source was our next natural impulse. But how? The Himalayan valleys are no jokes. The forest below was steep and thick. Distances here are deceptive.

The tune floated again, frailer and feebler this time, and finally melted away like mists on a mountain peak. We speculated as to its origin. The poet smelt sex in the sound and was sure the flutist was a Pahari shepherd girl. The Pahari girl was the "bee in his bonnet" now. The Simla hill-girls are full-blooded creatures, warm, sensuous and attractive. These spots are hunting grounds for sahibs and sardars. The plant-professor thought that it might be the cry of the mysterious mandrake of the medical men of the middle ages. I took refuge in Wordsworth: "If pure the stream, what matters from whence it bursts?

We decided to explore and followed the direction of the sound. We soon found ourselves in the dark depths of the forest, and a new world of sylvan beauty lay at our feet. It was a world of unsuspected wealth of wonder and surprise, a world of new sights, sounds and smells. A veritable paradise for the poet, the professor and even for the dilettante!

The air was damp and cold and the sun's rays reached in strips and broken fragments casting magical shadows on the furface. Points of silver lights lay scattered like million diamonds on an emerald carpet. Long shafts of light, piercing the impenetrable leafy-roof touched the autumnal leaves to a golden glory. Magic shadows cast their spells on birds and beasts as they played hide and seek in this faery world of soft light and shadowy forms, and a hundred strong smells "struck one's nostrils dumb".

But the mystery and the magic of its woodland music took our breath away. We seemed to have all unwittingly strayed into an enchanting world of sound, a world

of unheard melodies! A grand Vedic Chant of invisible choristers reached our ears, so we felt. An unseen winged orchestra was in progress, and as our ears got accustomed to the medley of sounds we discovered that beetles and birds were the merry makers who kept the valley hum with life and song.

The singing was at first like a distant orchestral choir, but a little attentive hearing enabled us to pick out the separate notes of the frisky warblers. Bird-music shook itself out of the boughs and branches, as though the whole valley was a strange concert hall.

Here were birds, hidden under thickets, scaling sharp short notes and there, perched upon swaying twigs, others were letting loose a shower of silvery sounds, like drops of water. From the distance came the funny laughter of the kingfishers, and tiny tots tooted themselves as they darted from a sun-splashed bower. The piping sweetness of the thrushes, the warblings of the wrens, the twittering of the linnets, the trailing cry of the larks, the nightingales' floating songs and the drum-beats of the sempathus, all these enchanted us into a world of sweet elemental music.

It was a thrill none of us had ever experienced before; a world of music few have ever seen or heard. Oh! for a musician who could "write down" these melodies and create immortal compositions of the passionate cries, longings and aspirations of bird-life!

But what about the faery flute we heard? Was it a strange bird's cry? Was it the sound of wind piercing through some hidden crevices of the tall pines? Or was it the music of the fabled Pan? We never discovered. Yes, sweet as are the heard melodies, the unheard ones are sweeter still.

## *COME WITH ME TO LOVELY KASHMIR*

OVER the bleak barren rocky mountain walls that rise almost perpendicularly skywards from the deep ravine below, away to the north where the white mists rise mysteriously from some hidden snow-fields, and yet far away beyond them, gleams the pink-tipped peak of glorious Nanga Parbat. Near by rises in solitary grandeur the giant Haramukh, overshadowing the treacherous waters of the Wular Lake, and a little further to the east stands, like a sentinel, Mahadev, watching solemnly over the pretty little village of Harwan, the birthplace of the great Buddhist teacher, Nagarjuna.

The river Jhelum winds its silvery way through the emerald valley below. And at the base of the long lines of pines that ascend the steep hillside of Gulmarg towards the alpine-flowered meadow, Killenmarg, that lies nestled at the foot of the snow-mantled Apharwat, I am sheltered in a needle-carpeted nook from the morning mists that drive through its outstretched branches, and the pines sigh softly. Tall and straight they climb the steep slope and their grey arms stretch downward till their soft green needle-fingers caress the dew-laden earth. All is quiet around me.

My eyes survey the magnificent panorama of mighty mountains and deep valleys, sun-kissed tops and shadowy glades, glistening glaciers and sapphire blue lakes, patches of pink and purple orchards in full bloom—Ah! the beauty all around me is too deep for words!

It is spring-time in the valley below and the earth is mantled in one glowing mass of variegated colours of cherry blossoms, almond flowers and the tender green shoots of poplar and chenar trees. The Dal Lake shines

silvery-white in the morning sun, reflecting on its cool, crystal-clear waters the surrounding snow-capped mountains, the terraced gardens of Nishat and Shalimar and the romantic Peri Mahal. On either side stand in solemn silence Hari Parbat (the deserted fort of Akbar) and Takt-e-Sulaiman (the ruined temple of Shankaracharya).

House-boats, Dhungas and Shikara boats, filled with pleasure-seekers and merry-makers, float gaily along to the sound of songs, drum-beats and the anklet bells of dancing girls and musicians. The floating gardens are rich with ripe melons and green cucumbers. Lotuses are in abundance everywhere. The mosaic-like growth of green singhara creepers, fathoms below, adds enchantment to the lake; the sweet purity of its waters and their crystal clearness tempt one to wish a watery grave. The little island in the lake, with its centuries-old chenar trees, where Jehangir used to besport himself with his nautch girls, who sang and danced to the rhythm and music of the rustling leaves and gurgling waters, make you hesitate in your choice; but the compelling beauty of this happy valley, which shrouds you in its magical splendour, makes you wish to live for ever.

The Moghul gardens of Shalimar, Nishat, Nassim and Chashma Shahi round the Dal Lake, and the gardens at Achabal, Veernag and Manasbal, are beauty-spots in this enchanting valley.

Aldous Huxley was disappointed with them; so was he with the Taj. But then one needs two perfect eyes to see beauty anywhere, and the audacious Aldous is, unhappily, a squint-eyed person.

The Moghul gardens are Persian in their origin and follow a set conventional plan with a message of beauty of their own. They are generally laid in terraces with a central water channel lined with cypress trees and small tanks with fountains and pigeon-holes at regular inter-

vals. But Shalimar and Nishat are uniquely situated, extensive and rich with flowering shrubs and shady trees. The white marble platforms over which the water flows in silvery cascades; the cool black marble pavilions, surrounded by spraying fountains; the snow-covered mountains in the background from whence flows clear, sparkling spring water through deep-cut channels; the expansive lake in the foreground, reflecting their glory in full; the surrounding orchards of almond and apricot in full flowering; the throng of Kashmiri men, women and children, in their coloured garments and their samovars filled with steaming tea, enjoying their warm afternoons, and the holiday spirit pervading the whole atmosphere—these make the gardens of Kashmir ever so attractive and beautiful. And what romances cluster round their origin and growth!

Shalimar! Garden of a thousand sweet memories and romantic love-episodes!! Jehangir, the Grand Moghul and the King of Aesthetes, planned it to spend his evenings with his queens in the summer months, though his beloved garden was the little one at Achabal, where he longed to be buried after his death. The cool shady Nassim Bagh, with centuries-old chenar trees, was another of his favourite gardens, where he loved to spend his morning hours with ministers and courtiers. But Shalimar was the romantic garden *par excellence* in Moghul history, immortalised by Thomas Moore in his poem, Lalla Rookh.

Lalla Rookh was the daughter of Aurangazeb, betrothed to a prince of Khorrasan, and the bridal party was camping at Lahore on its way from Delhi to Kashmir. A young handsome wandering minstrel was introduced to the princess to amuse and entertain her on the way. The youthful bard captivated the heart of the bride and the royal princess, torn by pangs of love, suffered agony.

The party arrived in Srinagar, the bride love-lorn and languished, and the wedding was to take place in the marble pavilion of Shalimar. The appointed auspicious moment rent the veil between the love-tormented maiden and the happy, anxious youth. Lo, and behold! the princess swoons, her face lit with glowing happiness and a significant smile playing about her shapely lips—the wandering minstrel sits bedecked as the Prince of Khorrasan!

Islamabad, thirty miles from Srinagar, was the ancient capital Avantipura of Avantivarman. Near by are the source of the Jhelum, the gardens of Achabal, the road to the abode of the Lord of Amarnath in his icy cave, and the ruins of Martand. This magnificent temple, dedicated to the Sun God, and built in the best Graeco-Roman style, with finely chiselled figures and friezes (now mostly scattered about in ruins), has, perhaps, the most beautiful and ideal situation for a temple in the world. Built on a raised ground and surrounded by snowy mountains, it commands a glorious view of the emerald valley below through which the river Jhelum winds its way amidst tall poplars and heavy-branched chenar trees. The architecture is unique and interesting and forms a connecting link between the arts of India and Greece. There are several other smaller temples of similar type throughout the valley, the little shrine of Pandrethan, near Srinagar, being the best known of them.

The art-crafts of Kashmir are widely known and universally admired. Kashmir shawls, woodwork and carving, silk embroidery, carpets and papier-mache—these have ever attracted the attention of visitors and connoisseurs. They are mostly cottage industries and are in the hands of the Muslims. The Hindu Pandits, though extremely shrewd and clever, prefer Government

service and other menial jobs and are satisfied with the pittance they get. Their position is very sad indeed. Half educated, innately lazy and innordinately proud, orthodox and fanatical, they live and starve amidst plenty. They are kept down from rising high and progressing further by three communal vested interests: the Dogras from Rajputana who are the virtual rulers, the Punjabees who have the control of official power in their hands, and the British, dominating over all these and making the best of the opportunity. What with their conservatism and lack of character, their status is declining and their future gloomy.

The womenfolk of Kashmir are lovely and exceedingly beautiful when they are young, but, strangely enough, the colour and freshness of their complexion seem to vanish quickly when they become mothers, in spite of the bracing climate and exhilarating environment. They dress in loose, coloured gown-like garments, (*pehrens,* they are called), with long sleeves folded near the hand and a waist-band. Their heads are covered with a cap-like cloth, embroidered, at times with jewels too. The Muslim women, like their menfolk, are industrious and are engaged in different occupations. They toil, spin, weave, embroider, even carve and paint. They make excellent cooks.

Srinagar, a city said to have been founded by one of the sons of the Emperor Asoka, is picturesque and beautiful when seen from afar, but filthy, smelly, dingy, and dirty when examined at close quarters. It is built on the river Jhelum, which takes several serpentine curves within the city area and is crossed by thirteen bridges, *kadals,* as they are called. The houses are built of wood and clay, (hence constant outbreaks of fire) and are ill-ventilated and uniformly insanitary. The roofs have gardens of poppies and irises, which make the city look

attractive from any eminence near by. In winter time the people live on the ground-floor, which, in summer, is used as a cattle-shed, and in the hot months the living apartments are generally upstairs.

The narrow lanes, which pass for streets, are crowded with a cosmopolitan humanity, Ladakis, Tibetans, men from Yarkand, Bokhara and other Central Asian markets, who meet in this city for trade on their way to India. At evenfall the tinkling bells of animals carrying caravans bring strange scenes to one's imagination—scenes of rugged fastnesses, snowy wastes, lamas, monasteries, deserts, valleys and of quaint customs and peoples. Kashmir, the Happy Valley, is not only the meeting ground of Indian, Persian, Mongolian and Mussalman cultures but also of the arts of China, India, Persia, and Greece. The world's "hunting-ground" is also the "lovers' paradise"; the richest valley, also the poorest country in the world.



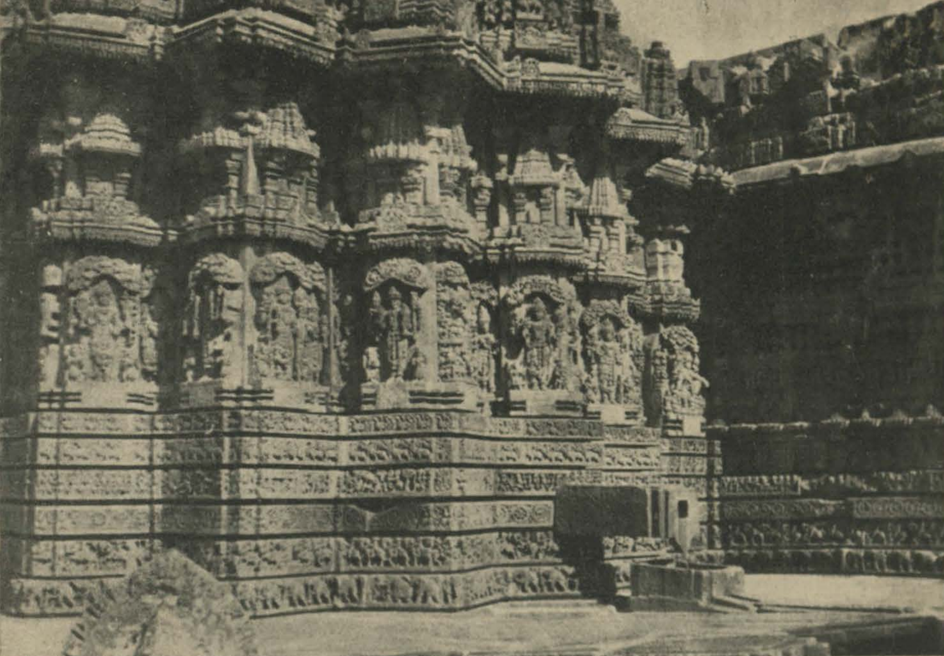
*Glory of the Himalayas*

*Shanti Gujar*



*Beauty of the Himalayas*

*Shanti Gujar*



*Halebid Temple—Mysore*
[redacted]



*Religious Procession in Kulu*  *Painting by S. Roerich*

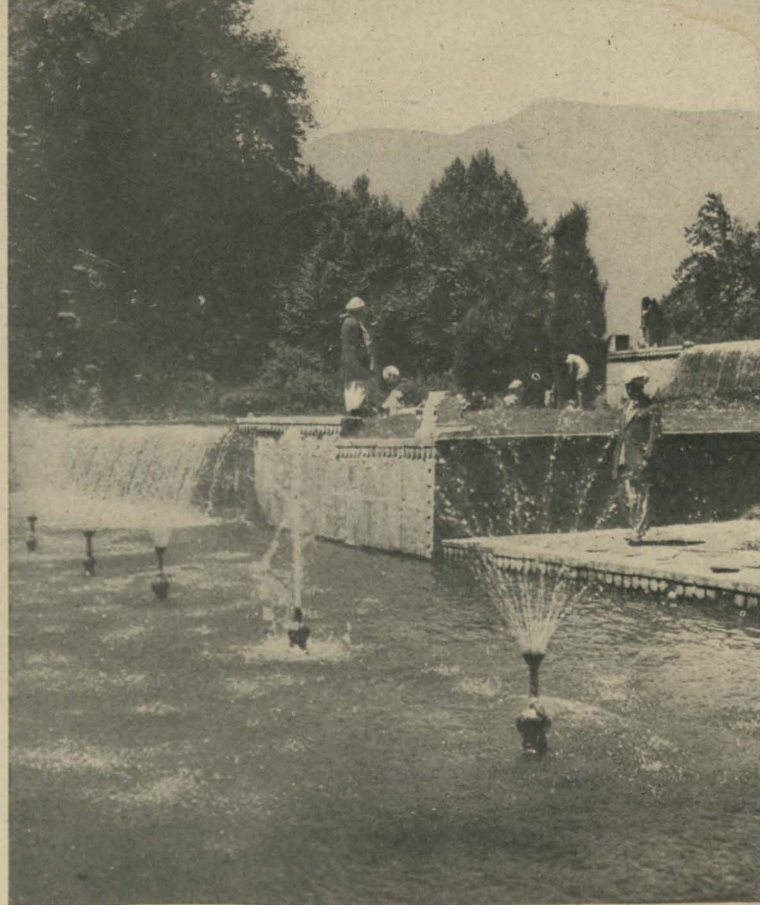


*On the road*
*to Gulmarg*
*Kashmir*

*Shanti Gujar*



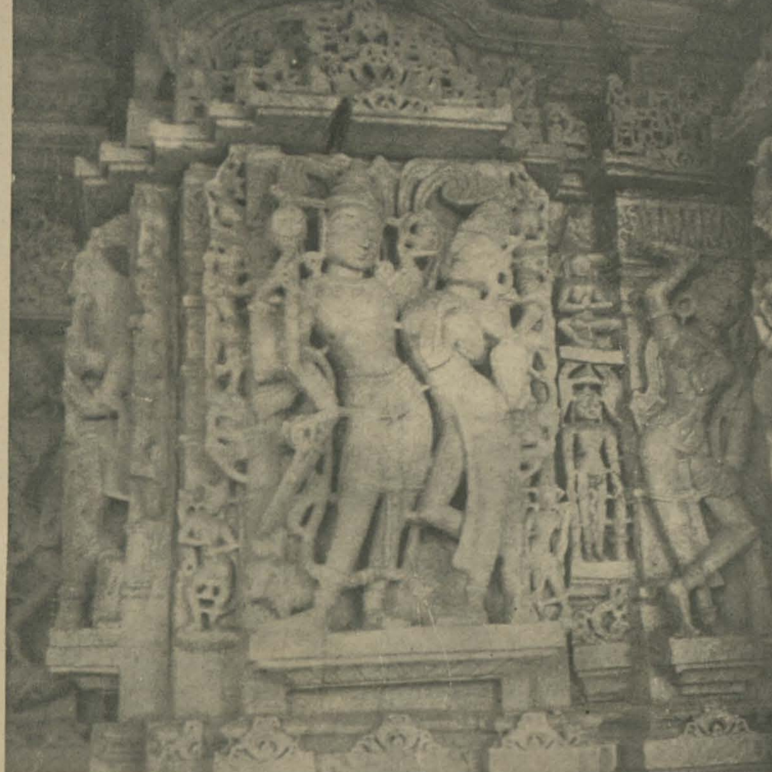
*A Kashmir Belle* — *Shanti Gujar*



*Mughal Garden* — *Nalawalla*



*Buddha* *Archeological Dept.*



*Sculptural Detail* — *Subodh Chandra*



*A Figure from Mohenjodaro*



*Kanishka (?) (Kushan)* *Archeological Dept.*



*Detail of Ambarnath*

*Subodh Chandra*

## *WITH THE BUDDHAS OF TAKSASHILA*

ART is not archaeology, and yet, strange as it may seem, it was the archaeologists who have been, till very recently, the pioneers in interpreting Oriental art to the West, and the theories they propounded and the conclusions they arrived at still dominate the world of art.

Archaeologists, both by their scholarship and aptitude, are necessarily antiquarians, and their interest mainly lies in the historical value of the objects discovered. They are mostly concerned with epigraphy, palaeography and iconography, in fixing dates, eras and periods, and in discovering a connecting historical continuity of a race or nation and its cultural reactions to its environment.

The ideals of the art and the aesthetic philosophy of its people do not generally interest them very much. Magnificent and praiseworthy as have been their services along their own line, their cirticisms and conclusions on the origin, growth and development of the fine arts have been confusing and often misleading.

One of the foremost among them wrote not so very long ago: "After 300 A.D. Indian sculpture, properly so-called, hardly deserves to be reckoned as art. The figures both of men and gods become stiff and formal, and the idea of power is clumsily expressed by the multiplication of limbs and other members of the body. The many-headed, many-armed gods and goddesses that crowd the walls of old temples have no pretensions to beauty and are often hideous and grotesque."

Such a statement as this cannot but rouse the indignation of any student of Indian sculpture, asserted as it is in the face of proven and oft-repeated facts that Indian

sculpture really attained its zenith after the 4th century (as witness the magnificent sculptures of Mahabalipuram, Elephanta, Ellora and Borobodur) and that definite artistic canons were formulated and followed by the craftsmen (as seen in the writings of Sukracharya).

But the most amazing and loudly trumpeted of these claims is, of course, the so-called Greek influence on Indian art, and the birth of the Greco-Bacterian or Gandharan school of sculpture in India. Two eminent European savants, Foucher and Lecoq, even traced the origin of the Buddha image to the Greek influence.

They argued that inasmuch as the teachings of the Lord Buddha strictly prohibited image worship and as there were no human representations of the Great Teacher, but only symbols, in the earlier Buddhist art, therefore the motif of the seated figure of Sakya Muni must have been introduced by the Greeks when they invaded India under the directing personality of Alexander the Great.

This is a flimsy argument at best. The art of image making is as old as the Hindu religion—how old, who can tell? Not only the Sutras of Pantanjali describe these images (murtis) but the Brahmanas of the Vedas refer to them also. The cross-legged sitting posture is one of the asanas of practical yoga; and the Great Lord of the Universe, Siva, has ever been represented as a Maha Yogi, seated cross-legged in a deep contemplative state.

The icon of Dakshinamurti, sitting under a tree in the posture described above, is an ancient Hindu idea. In fact it is a visible representation of an inward beatitude of the mind and soul, at a certain stage in yoga development, where senses controlled, mind equipoised, soul self-illumined, the Yogi reaches the higher state of samadhi. At that level he is intensively active, dynamic and vibrant, yet serene and self-composed.

It is this state of yoga that is represented in the figure of the Dhyani Buddha. It is fundamentally an Indian conception. We do not know if the ancient Greeks had developed a yoga system of their own and if they had also studied and practised the 64 kinds of asanas (postures) which the Indian yogis practise. The ancient Indian sculptors had evolved a thousand and one forms (including that highest form of sculptural art ever conceived by man, the dancing figure of Nataraja) with characteristic poses and gestures for their deities, and it is, therefore, amusing to hear this verdict on the origin of the Buddha image.

And now, what are these Gandharan sculptures of which so much fuss is made? At best, they are a bastard and hybrid type of art. The Hellenistic wave of civilisation that moved eastward under Alexander was not the highest crest of Greek culture. It was a decadent, degenerate Hellenism, not Periclean Greece, that swamped and stampeded over North-West India, and with it came, if it came at all, an equally decadent and degenerate art.

The fusion of these two cultures did indeed result, as is inevitable, in a mongrel type of art, which goes by the name of Gandharan Art. But a careful and discriminating study of the best pieces of these two schools of sculpture would reveal their respective merits and demerits even to unaccustomed eyes and the untutored mind of a layman.

The early Buddhist sculpture is dynamic, vital, throbbing with life and full of subtle suggestiveness of the realities of an inner world of subjective religious experience, while the Gandharan sculptures, even the best of them lack this subtle, "something", this inner vibrant spiritual quality. It is elegant and pleasing to the senses but not inspiring; it is weak and effeminate and is like the glittering oyster shell without the pearl

within. It is beauty without a soul.

To claim for this art a unique place and to trace all the greatest achievements of the old Indian masters to its influence is too tall a claim indeed. Indian art was great before the Greeks came and remained great after they had left, as witness the masterpieces of the Gupta Age in the North India and the Pallava and Chola art in the South. Surely there is a limit even to the wisdom of the Wise Men of the West!

The home of these Gandharan sculptures lies chiefly in the plains of the Punjab and in the valleys of the North-West Frontier of India. The extensive ruins of Taxila—Taksashila as it was called in ancient India—still contain some of the finest examples of this art in stone and stucco. The name Taxila conjures up before one's mind some of the mighty personalities of both Greek and Indian history: Alexander, Porus, Chanakya, Chandragupta Maurya, Kanishka, and even still greater, like Pythagoras and Apollonius of Tyana; Asoka, the Beloved of the Gods, ruled over that city as Governor; the two intrepid Chinese travellers, Fa Hian and Houien Tsang, have left for posterity glowing accounts of this once great capital and seat of learning.

A city of thousand memories, its splendour and fame lasted for over a thousand years. A great university town, it was a model and inspiration to the other ancient universities like Vaisali, Nalanda and Sri Vijaya. It was as dear to the heart of the scholar as Avanti or Kashi was to the pious-minded. Taxila, like Kosambi, Sanchi and Sarnath, was a city rich in Buddhist legends and lore; a city which gave birth to Kautilya, the author of the Arthasastra, the city where King Porus fought valiantly and won the homage of his conqueror, the youthful Macedonian.

The present site of this ruined city, amidst a sun-

scorched valley and surrounded by low hills and snow mountains in the distance, lies close to that great highway that connects Calcutta with Peshawar and about twenty miles from the cantonment station of Rawalpindi. The ruins cover a vast area and are, thanks to the enterprise of the late Sir John Marshall, connected with motorable roads. Vast buried cities with their narrow streets, roofless houses and desolate appearance lie scattered all over this valley. The excavations round about Sirkap had just begun when I visited Taxila first and since then miles of the buried mounds have been opened up by the Archaeological Department.

The architecture of Sirkap, especially what is left of an old palace, is very Greek with its Corinthian pillars and facades. Indian motifs of Gandabherunda, Kubera and Ganas are equally common there. Some of the decorative designs at the basements are distinctly and definitely Hindu, like the carved figures of Manmatha and Rati on their respective vahans.

The remains of Julian are on a hill, from where one gets a commanding view of the whole city with its scattered ruins. The stupa here is surrounded by niches containing stucco images of Bodhisatva and Buddha, some in good condition and others badly damaged and broken; cubicles and quadrangles where the monks lived and taught, water tanks and quiet open spaces where they bathed and rested are still to be seen there.

Not far from here is the Greek-style temple of Jandial with its pediment and lonian columns. It reminded one of the famous Martand temple in Kashmir, and may have been a Sun Temple like it. But the most interesting monument in the whole of the Taxila ruins is, of course, the great stupa of Dharmarajika, which once contained a bone relic of the Buddha. The stupa itself is not very interesting, either for its size or beauty, but the

small shrines round about it must have contained fine examples of Greco-Buddhist art, most of which have either perished or been removed by treasure hunters.

More than these scattered ruins and their romantic associations, which are of interest to visitors, it is the archaeological museum on the site that is the most sought after place today by students of art. A fine and rare collection of the art of Taxila is on show there in a decent building and carefully arranged. Here you get a glimpse of the glory that must have been Taksashila, with its innumerable figures and freezes, in the best Gandharan style, delicate carvings on panels and pedestals, jewellery and ornaments in gold and with precious stones, cooking vessels, pottery and even toilet objects. Their workmanship is as perfect and fine as any made by the most skilled workman of modern days, and as works of art, of surpassing beauty.

If one could only look into the Memory of Nature and recall the visions of the past of this ancient university town, what aesthetic delight, what artistic thrills, what pictures of loveliness and what spiritual adventures would there not be for the Time-Space Voyager into the Past?

## *IN PREHISTORIC MOHENJO DARO*

INDIA is a land of striking contrasts. Old and new, past and present, ancient and modern, live and thrive side by side. Automobiles and bullock carts, radios and *anchals,* medicine and magic, freethought and tradition, autocracy and democracy, science and superstition, freedom and slavery—all these go merrily cheek-by-jowl in this country. New cities arise over the ruins of old ones and ancient civilisations lie buried deep near modern towns. Many dead cities are there in India, and varied are the strange memories they evoke in the minds of a wanderer among their ruins.

The dust-laden and dimly-remembered university town of Taksashila with its austere monasteries and ornate Gandharan sculptures; the ancient site of Hastinapura, with its crumbling tombs and towers of empires that ruled over it; the pink city of Amber, with its lofty ramparts and marble halls; the vast extensive ruins of Bijapur, with its magnificent mosques and whispering gallery; the rugged picturesque temple city of Hampi, with its lotus palaces and pillared *mandapams;* the romantically situated Chandravalli, with its prehistoric finds—these are some of the never-to-be-forgotten memories of a wanderer's life in India.

But the strangest and the most intriguing of them all is Mohenjo Daro, in the Indus Valley, the city that has puzzled both the archaeologists and the students of history. It is not every day that one gets an opportunity to ramble leisurely through the main thoroughfares and side-streets of a five-thousand-year-old city, to drink water from wells used by the inhabitants of a long forgotten civilisation, to examine the pots and pans handled by

them, to admire the trinkets and jewelleries worn by the fair women of those distant days, to see the simple toys and dolls that amused the children of that period, to sit and muse on the doorsteps of spacious halls that had once heard the soft whispers of young lovers and the laughter of happy boys and girls, and to survey from a storeyed structure the extent of a city that had once witnessed life ebb and flow with all its changing joys and sorrows, wealth and poverty, births and deaths, rise and fall. And yet such an opportunity offers itself when one visits this pre-historic city so long sand-covered and hidden from man.

What is the origin of this city, and who built it in the midst of a sandy desert—or was it a desert at all at that remote period?—and what was the nature of the civilisation of the people? Were they pre-Aryan, and if so, to what stock did they belong? Did Alexander know of their existence? Had Asoka any embassy in their court or did he have one of his stone edicts planted there? What was the faith of the people and did Buddhism ever reach them, or were they a forgotten race even before the Buddha was born? To these and many other questions, neither the site nor the objects discovered within its area give any satisfactory answer. The two sumptuous and profusely illustrated volumes of Sir John Marshall, the late Director-General of Archaeology in India, give but vague information about the city, its citizens and civilisation. The city is supposed to be of pre-Aryan origin, the people of the same type and race as the Sumerians of Mesopotamia, and the civilisation was arbitrarily called The Indus Valley Civilisation on account of similar discoveries made along the course of the river Indus, like Harappa.

These sites were first noticed as a result of an aerial survey conducted by Mr. Hargreaves. The ruins of

Mohenjo Daro were located by the late Mr. Rakhaldas Bannerjea of the Archaeological Department, who first thought them to be the remains of a Buddhist *stupa;* but when the actual excavations began, under the supervision of Sir John Marshall and Mr. Dikshit, most startling results were obtained. The mound that rose to a height of about fifty feet from the surrounding ruins, and which was mistaken for a stupa, was found to be merely a brick storeyed structure consisting of several rooms, over the remains of yet older buildings, and similar burnt-brick buildings extended all round covered under debris. Further operations brought to light incredible evidences of an ancient city in ruins, with its streets and lanes, temples and living houses, wells and tanks, drains and troughs. The dwelling houses, with their high walls, doors and windows, brick-pavements, private bathrooms, water wells and perfect drainage system, showed that an advanced state of civilisation had once prevailed there.

As one walks through the main streets, which run north and south, with side-lanes at right angles, one cannot help admiring the excellent town planning of those days. Though the city seems crowded, with no gardens or compounds, like all oriental cities, yet they indicate seclusion and comfort like modern American apartments. Some of the buildings may have been two or three storeys high, where separate families lived with a common staircase entrance. The roofs must have been constructed of wood, though no traces of it remain except the marks for rafters on the walls. Evidently doors and windows were of the same perishable material. The findings do not so far include any pieces of furniture or mosaics to suggest the nature of interior decorations.

The large quantity of painted pottery, of all shapes and sizes, from an ordinary ink-pot to a beer-barrel, indicate a striking development in ceramic art. There are

any number of varieties of vases, jars and dishes, with interesting decorative designs of flowers, creepers, animals and human beings, all painted in black and brick-red colours, resembling the pottery discovered in Mesopotamia. In fact, in two broken pieces of vases, I noticed actual copies of Egyptian fresco figures, to which I drew the attention of Mr. Puri, the officer in charge, and which had not been hitherto observed. Domestic utensils, spoons, small and big metal dishes, grinding stones, mortars, strainers, stone axes, metal knives, copper tools are some of the valuable finds.

"Vanity, thy name is woman", thus summarised Shakespeare the one common universal trait of women of all climes and of all times; and this is amply evidenced by the varieties of fine jewellery that are kept collected in the small museum at Mohenjo Daro. There are necklaces, bracelets, chains and trinkets of every kind, made of gold and silver, of precious and semi-precious stones. Some of them are of interesting pattern, though a bit crude and primitive, like those the gypsies wear to-day. Beads of all shapes and colours, tiny carved ivory combs, silver and gold rings are some more of the specimens collected and kept in the museum.

But the most interesting and valuable, from the point of view of historical evidence, of these finds are the seals bearing inscriptions and drawings of animal figures. They reveal a remarkable affinity with the finds at Sumer and Elam and confirm the general estimate of their age. The seals are by themselves excellent works of art, especially the drawings of animals, which show precision of line, fine imagination and a developed decorative sense. Bulls, elephants, rhinoceros, scorpions, unicorns and other mythical creatures are generally drawn on these seals. The Brahmani bull, with its heavy body, long horns, short legs, long tail, high hump

and thickly-folded neck, is one of the common drawings. The inscriptions are in a quaint script not deciphered as yet. There are other tablets with inscriptions and human figures incised on them.

So far no work of art of any outstanding merit has been discovered, except two statues, in alabaster and limestone, of the heads of men with clipped beards, small eyes, thick lips, long nose and receding forehead, reminding one again of the Sumerian type. A copper figure of a nude girl, with heavy ornaments round her arms, is a delightful sculpture, but it is difficult to judge the art of the period from this single example. No paintings have so far been found except what is seen on the pottery; neither have any samples of textile to show the kind of cloth the people wore.

The skeletons that were discovered in large numbers confirm the surmise of their pre-Aryan type but leave much to be desired in the way of definite information. My own impression is that, notwithstanding its Sumerian nature as revealed in the vases, seals and the two head-studies, this has a greater affinity with the Dravidian civilization that preceded the Aryan, and a careful study of the jewellery, utensile, terracotta toys and the little copper girl figure tend to confirm this assumption. The north-western nomadic tribe, the Brahuis, still speak a quaint form of Tamil and have almost the same habits and customs as the Tamil speaking gypsies of South India.

Mohenjo Daro lies in the midst of a desert jungle of short rushes and reeds. The soil is sandy and full of saltpetre, which gives the illusion of snow-covered ground in moonlit nights. There are two ways of approach to this buried city from Karachi: one via Kotri Junction and Dokri, which is the nearest railway station to the ruins, being only 8½ miles distant, and easy to

reach by camel or tonga; and the other is via Ruk Junction (nine hours from Quetta) to Larkana town, from where one can hire a car to Mohenjo Daro, about 22 miles. There is an excellent canal road, the result of the Sukkur Barrage scheme, and this can be used for a good distance with the special permission of the irrigation authorities.

The road runs through jungles of shrubs from which untamed camels crane their elastic necks to have a good look at the intruders, affording a fantastic desert sight. The clearance near the site is not much, only about 100 acres out of the 400 originally selected for excavation. The main portion of the operations lies to the right as you enter, and to your left is also another large piece of excavated ground, and before you reach the museum you have practically driven through the excavated portion of the city and crossed two of the main streets all unknowingly. The buildings with their innumerable entrances and doorways perplex you, and as you walk from room to room, from corridor to corridor, from well to well, you wonder that the sands of several thousand of years have not completely erased them to the ground. The drainage, both open and closed, runs everywhere, and the wells are circular in shape, fitted to perfection with wedge-shaped bricks. The water is deep and tastes not bad. There are corbelled archways and brick-paved bathrooms. The exposed portions are only a fragment of the yet to be excavated city; and what more startling discoveries are in store time alone will reveal!

## *IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF KAMINITA*

DARK shadowy foothills filigreed with the rose-pink peaks of the distant Himalayas. Green and yellow fields studded with red-tiled huts like a Moorish mosaic. Mango groves and bamboo thickets like oases in a desert. A wooded knoll with a small shrine, and not far off a solitary stone pillar, battered and broken by weather and age, with the most significant historic inscription in the world: "His Majesty King Piyadasa in the twenty-first year of his reign, having come in person did reverence. Because here Buddha, the Sakya ascetic, was born, he had a stone horse made and set up on a pillar. Because here the Venerable One was born, the village of Lumbini has been made revenue-free and has partaken of the King's bounty." This is Kapilavastu today.

Kapilavastu is the sacred spot where Gautama the Buddha was born. This, the Lumbini Gardens of legend and scripture, is the first of holy places for the Buddhists. Mayadevi, the queen of the Sakyas, was on her way to Kosala, her father's country, and camping at this pleasure garden, she rested under a spreading tree, dreaming of the glory vouchsafed to her; and at this spot He, the Thathagata, came to the world. King Asoka raised the pillar to mark the site over twenty centuries back, and since then millions have followed his steps to pay homage and reverence to one of the world's holiest grounds. Tibetan lamas, Sinhalese priests, Chinese pilgrims, Burmese bhikus and worshippers from Siam and Cambodia still continue the pilgrimage.

Nothing now remains of the Nandavana at Lumbini. No lily-tanks and lotus-ponds, no creeper-covered bowers and flower-meadowed avenues, no jasmine pavilions and

pomegranate parks, no golden deer and silver stags, no emerald parrots and purple peacocks, no babbling brooks and singing birds. Just a deserted place haunted by jackals and brigands. But the thrill of standing on the spot where the Teacher of men and gods first saw the light makes you forget the present sordid surroundings and takes you on the wings of imagination to a world rich with fragrant memories.

Six kos (12 miles) north-west lies the ruined city of Kapilavastu, once the glorious town of the Sakyas. Citadel walls, low ridges, circular mounds, square tanks and crumbled mandapams mark today its ancient site. The river Rohini flows placidly to the west and the two magnificent palaces of Suddhodana and Mayadevi are now two big heaps of large red bricks and fragments of broken walls. Clusters of trees give shelter and shade to tired travellers and lotus-filled ponds still refresh their wearied limbs. The name of the town itself has changed from Kapilavastu to Piprahave; and it was from a stupa on this site that the archaeologists excavated a crystal box containing a relic of the Lord Buddha that is now in Siam.

Bridgmanguj, in the U.P., is the nearest railway station to this historic place. No taxis or buses meet you at the station but black moving hillocks known as *hathis* in this part of the world. Elephant riding is no joy-ride at the best of times and even on fine roads; and two days' tilting and rollicking on its ponderous back over rugged paths tries one's nerves and patience. There are no tourists' guides or comforts anywhere on the route and one must make the best use of the villagers and their hospitality. A real pilgrimage it is.

Kausinagara, modern Kasia, is a straggling little village in the district of Gorakpur, near the foothills of the Himalayas. It is a dust-laden and poverty-stricken

place and even the remains of the old town are not much visible, except the enormous dagoba and the giant lying figure of the Buddha. The last of the four great *kshetras* for the Buddhists in India, to visit all of which in one's life is to attain Arhatship in that life, accoding to a Buddhist tradition, this place is visited by thousands of worshippers from all over the Buddhist world on the Vesak Day. Cool groves abound near by where the pilgrims camp and enjoy their rest and repast. The dagoba is in ruins and the shrine in which the Mahaparanirvana Buddha lies stretched in eternal sleep is just an ordinary brick and mortar structure. The lying figure, slightly smaller than the one at Polanuruwa and bigger than the one in the last cave at Ajanta, is a fine work of art, as beautiful and majestic as the Ceylon one.

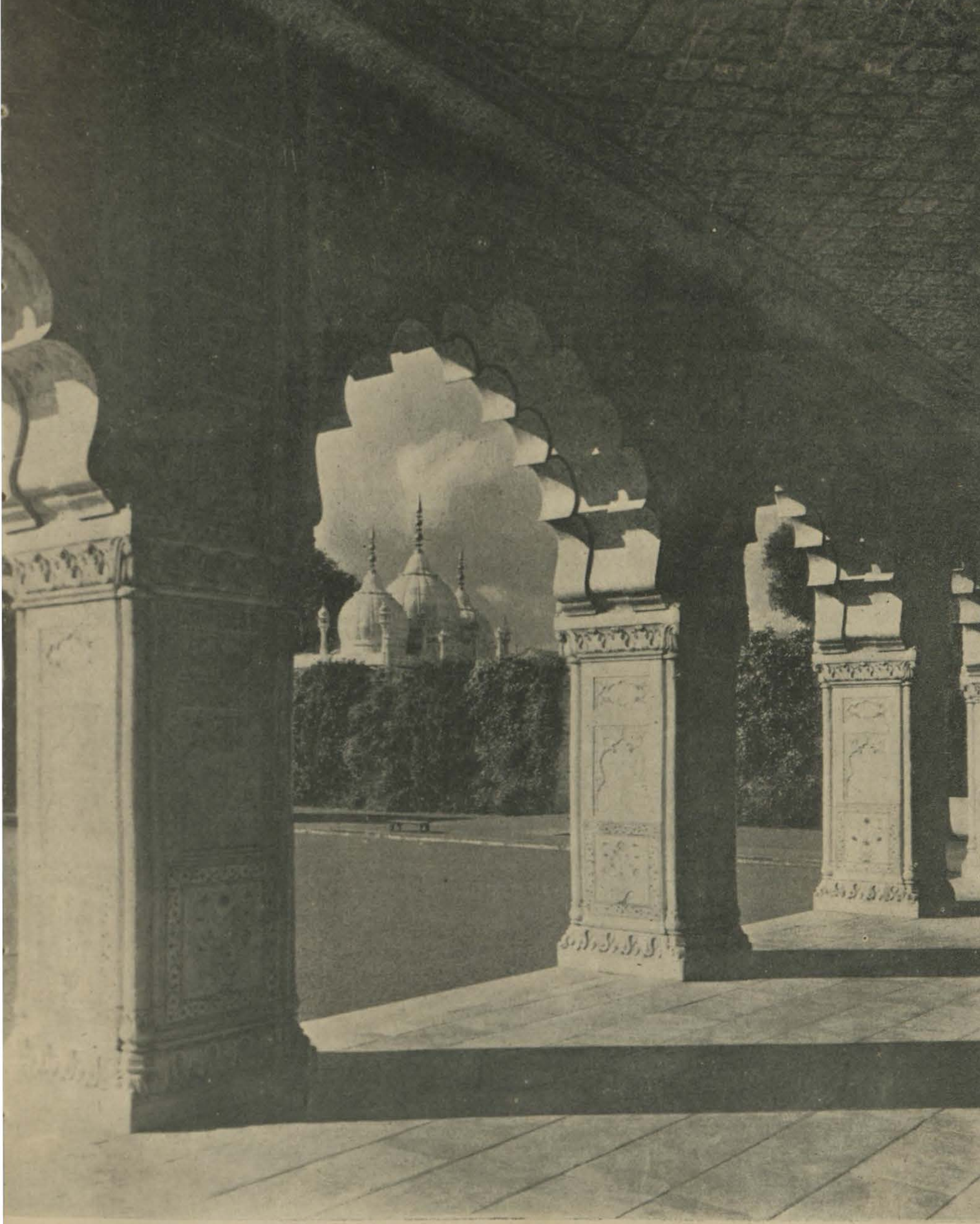
There comes to your mind, as you gaze at this wonderful statute, the last scene and the last words spoken by the Lord: "Be ye lamps unto yourselves. Be ye a refuge to yourselves": the supreme message given to mankind by the Liberated Ones, the Jivanmuktas of the world. No worship, no ceremonies, no blind following of scriptures, no gurus, no crutches of any sort. Self-discovery is the supreme Truth. Gazing at the form lying before you in mute slience you are again reminded of the sceptic Subhada's last words as the body of the Lord was covered up by leaping tongues of flame: "Enough, friends, do not grieve or lament; we are all freed from the great ascetic. We have been till now troubled by being told. 'This is befitting to you, this is not befitting to you'. Now we can do what we wish, and refrain from doing what we do not wish." There will always be Anandas and Subhadas, Peters and Thomases in the world, for Truth demands not only faith and belief but doubt and questioning. To doubt is to know: to question is to understand; to challenge is to find. There is no other royal way to knowledge.

## *CITIES OF THE GRAND MOGHULS*

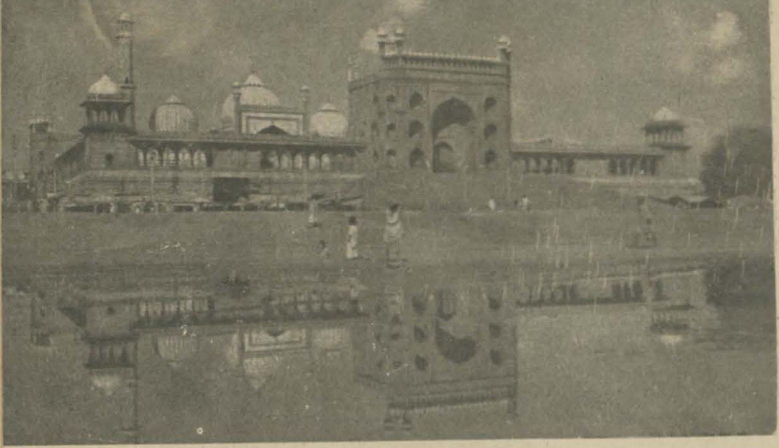
Delhi is indeed the imperial city as Benares is the eternal city of the world. The splendour that was Delhi can only be equalled by "the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome." Bokhara and Samarkand, Damascus and Baghdad, with all their fabulous wealth, pomp and power, found their rival in this ancient city, which was as great as the greatest among them in their days of glory. Delhi is a city of destiny, a city of strange fates; in many respects the antithesis of Benares. The former has always been a royal city, the later a holy one: Delhi, a city of palaces and kingly courts, Benares a city of temples and monasteries; Delhi the capital of mighty empires and powerful dynasties, Benares the birthplace of religions and philosophies; Delhi a city of many vicissitudes, her splendour waxing and waning like the effulgent glory of the moon, while the greatness and sanctity of Benares even in its evil days have remained steady and bright like the blinding splendour of the noonday sun.

A visitor to Delhi sees all round him ancient monuments, crumbling ruins, old tombs and decaying relics of the dead past. A site that had seen several magnificent cities rise, grow and decay, several races and cultures clash and fuse with one another, several powerful empires rise and fall, and has another modern city on her fair bosom, is most assuredly a very interesting place for any one to visit, much more so for an antiquarian, an archaeologist, or a student of art.

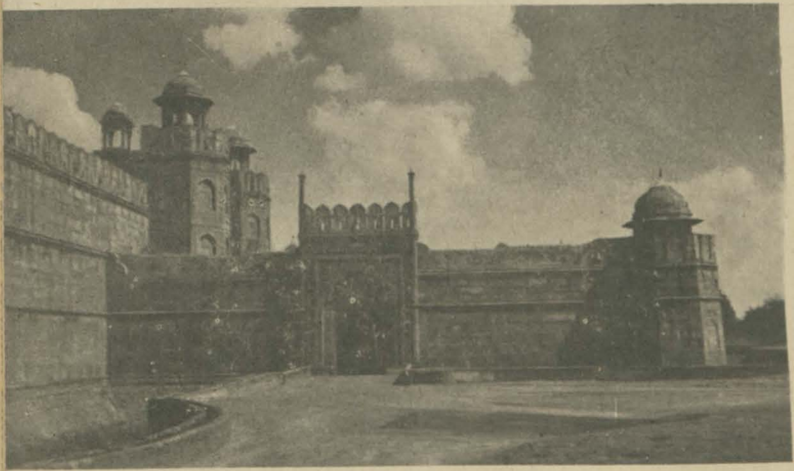
Ancient history is writ large everywhere in Delhi. How ancient, who can tell? The oldest ruins to remind us of her great antiquity are the site of Indraprastham



*A View of the Pearl Mosque—Delhi*



*Jumma Masjid*



*Red Fort*



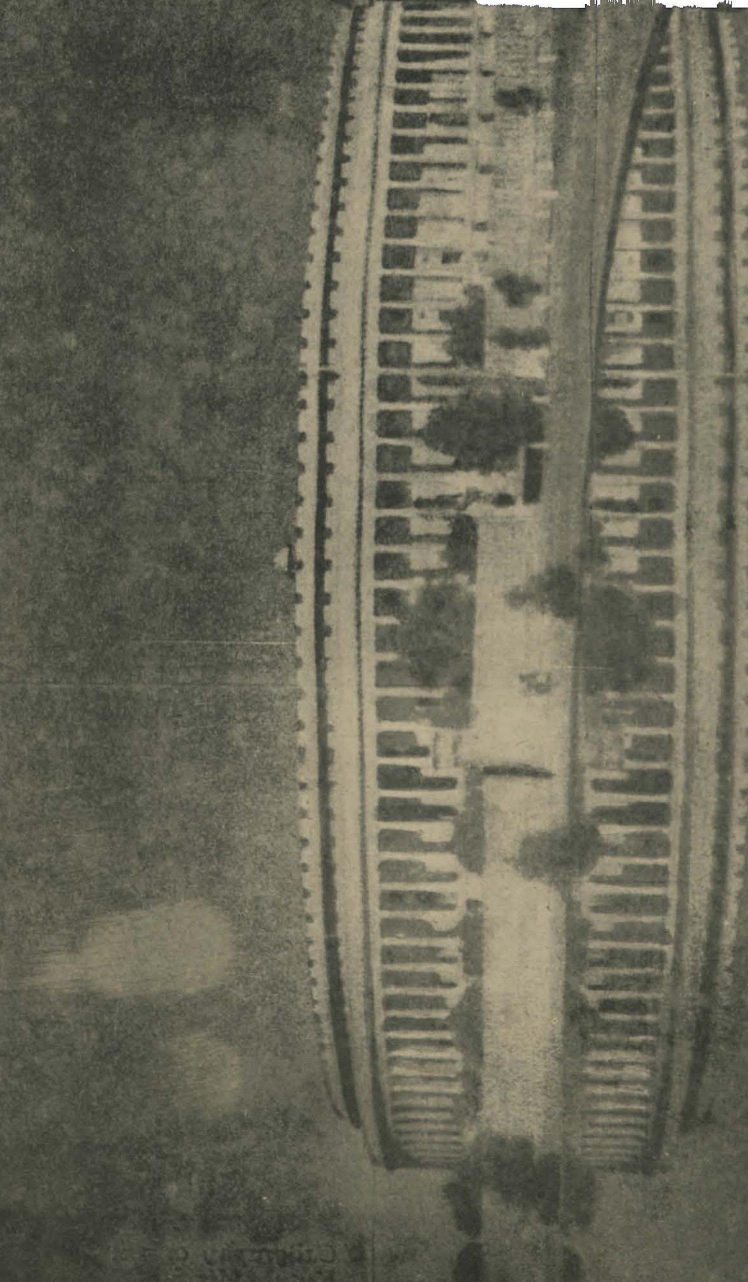
*Royal Bath*

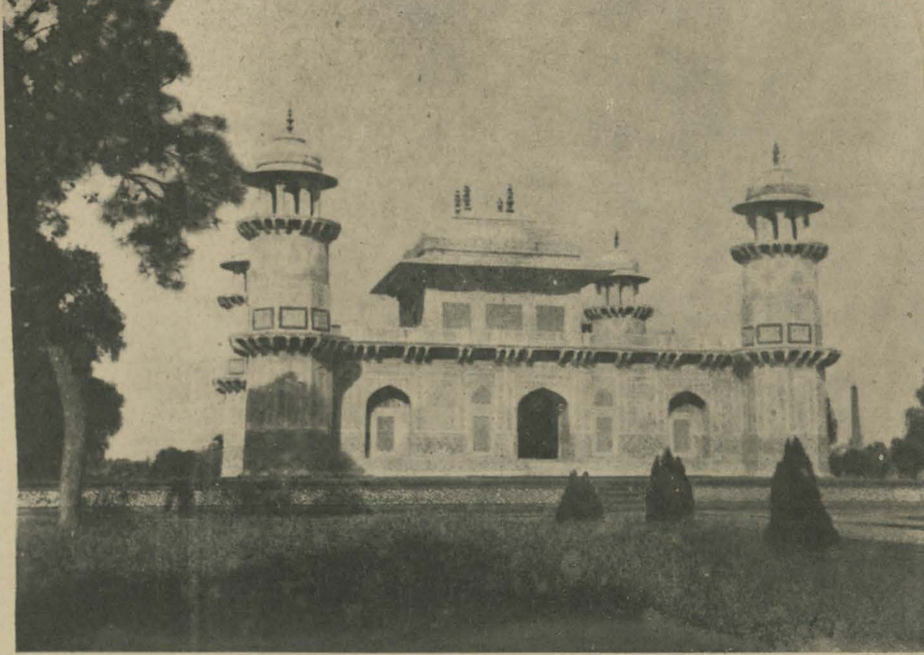


*Kutub Minar—Delhi*

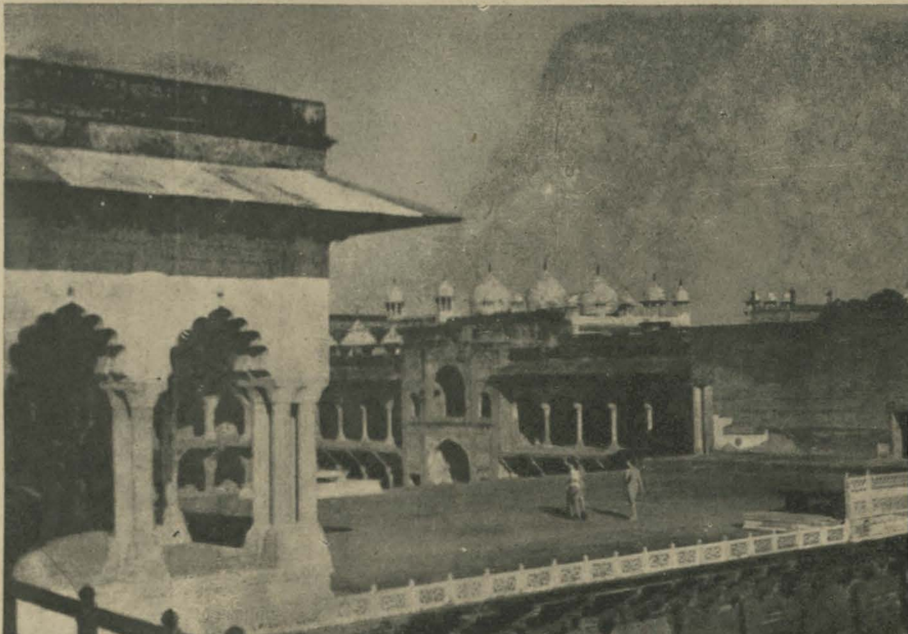


*Caligraphy on the Kutub Minar*





*The Tomb of Itmad-Ud-Daula—Agra*



*Moghul Palace—Agra*



*The Taj* *V. P. Bhatt*



*Jasmin Tower*
*Agra Fort*



*Buland Darwaza*
*Fatehpur Sikri*



*Panch Mahal*
*Fatehpur Sikri*



*The Gate at Sanchi*

on a high eminence rising gently from the surrounding plains, and the iron pillars of Asoka near Old Delhi. Indraprastha was the city *par excellence* of the Mahabharata period. The old books describe it as the most magnificent city of those days, with high, towering walls, stately streets, beautiful palaces, pillared halls, green parks and rich temples. The present site of this once glorious city (which is now identified and known as Purana Killa) is now marked by the fort walls built by the first of the Grand Moghuls, Babar, with a mosque (an old Hindu temple converted into a mosque) and the two-storeyed library building where Humayun, the second of the Moghul kings, met his untimely death by falling down the steep narrow steps, while coming down from his prayers.

The view of the surrounding plains from the spot where Humayun used to pray, especially at the hour of sunset, is most lovely, and the gorgeous sunsets seen from these release within you hidden and hitherto unfelt springs of aesthetic joy. No wonder the Grand Moghuls, who loved beauty and nature as no other royalties ever loved them—except, perhaps, the great French kings of Versailles—selected such sublime spots for their retreat and prayer. This realization comes over you again and again, whenever you visit the Moghul monuments. What builders were these kings! Truly did they "build like giants and finish like fairies."

The huge gateway (perhaps the largest gate entrance in the world) at Fatehpur Sikri, the immense courtyard with fountains surrounding the noble tomb of Akbar at Sikandra, the delicately carved marble walls of the tomb of It-mud-ullah at Agra, the gorgeous inlaid work of the throne-room in Delhi, the "vision beautiful" of the incomparable Taj, all these extol the culture and refinement of these beauty-loving monarchs. Indian art had

never known such courtly patronage and such enrichment since the days of the Gupta kings.

The pre-Muhammedan monumental remains of Delhi are not many. The two striking works of art are, as mentioned before, the two iron pillars which reveal the advanced state of the science of metallurgy in ancient India. The other monuments of a more perishable nature are, of course, under the debris of the ruins of the old cities awaiting the spade of the archaeologists. The remains of Muslim India are rich and varied, the most notable among them being the Fort with its marble palaces, mosques, gardens and fountains, the tombs of Humayun and Nizamuddin and of the poet Khusru, the world-famous Jumma Masjid, and that wonderful tower in stone, the Kutub Minar.

The last mentioned is the earliest of them, and as a work of architectural art stands supreme and unrivalled. The wonderful proportions of the tower, considering the magnitude of its height, the finely chiselled flutings and the calligraphic inscriptions from the Koran, make it an admirable artistic production. The ruins of the old Hindu temple near by add to the beauty and majesty of the Minar.

The Fort in Delhi contains exquisite works of architecture, only rivalled by the palaces within the Fort of Agra. The Diwan--i-Khas, with its intricate inlaid work on marble pillars, the king's bath, with its lovely patterns of creepers and flowers on the marble floors, the Rang Mahal, with its multi-coloured designs and decorations on roofs and walls, the richly designed and cunningly carved marble screens of the Hall of Justice, the pure and chaste gem of a building in white marble, the Moti Masjid, all these are silent witnesses of a once glorious past.

The museum within the Fort has some very interest-

ing collections of miniature paintings, statues, textiles and other valuable things of delightful workmanship. The art of Moghul India was one of joyous creation, as the art of Hindu India was one of religious offering. Moghul art was not an exotic plant transplanted on the Indian soil by an alien culture, but an indigenous art made rich by the assimilation of such strikingly individualistic cultures and arts as those of Persia, Arabia, China and Turkestan. Hence its uniqueness and richness.

What of the New Delhi that was raised on the ruins of an old city at enormous cost by the India Government for its capital? The site selected is one of the grandest and has the same commanding view as the old Indraprastha, which towers high some three miles away. The town-planning of New Delhi is spacious, extensive and most admirable from the health and sanitary points of view. The long stretches of metalled roads and avenues with planted shrubs and trees, the circles and squares at the crossing of roads with their little parks and fountains make it a garden city.

But what of its architectural features and their artistic merits? The less said about them the better. The designing of New Delhi by Lutyens-Baker was an Himalayan blunder, and the carrying out of the plan at a fabulous cost was a colossal crime. It is difficult to condemn the architecture that has been imposed on India as New Delhi without giving offence to those concerned in this monumental stupidity. New Delhi has no architecture, but is a mass of masonry and a pile of stones. It is a scandalous waste of public money on a pile of buildings meant for Government offices and official residences without regard to either public utility or cultural values. The capital is unworthy of this imperial city, which still has within its bosom some marvellous pieces

of architecture.

One wonders, as one looks at New Delhi, why this sort of capital for India? and what was the idea behind it all? What is the porpose of a capital city, and does it stand for anything in the imagination of the people? In olden days, when men built cities, their one idea was to make them living, vital centres, where life throbbed in all its manifold aspects, where commerce and trade flourished, where artists and artisans created beautiful things, where scholars and students assembled to enrich their knowledge, where temples and seats of learning were maintained for the purpose of religious, mental and moral welfare, where kings and ministers resided to rule and protect their subjects, and where the tide of life ebbed and flowed, nourishing the springs of society and state and where culture and civilisation grew and developed.

New Delhi is purely and solely meant for the Viceroy, for the location of the Secretariat buildings, the Council chambers and the living quarters of officers and clerks. The whole city centres round these Government edifices, and millions of poor men's money were wasted in this ignoble cause. Art, science, education, trade and commerce were thrust into the background, and in fact are not in the plan; but the Government House and the Secretariat and Council buildings dominate and form the hub of the city. But are these buildings at least beautiful and are they worthy of the new capital of India? When the whole of Northern India is rich in indigenous architecture and when Delhi itself contains some magnificent buildings, it is amazing that the architects of New Delhi should have attempted to impose a style of architecture on India which is incongruous and out of place in the country.

The architecture is neither Indian nor European, but

a jumble of styles, types and features of Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Indian and Modern, so that they look merely big and impressive without being beautiful and attractive. The wastage of masonry on certain of the buildings, to make them look massive, is monstrous. Some of the Moghul buildings are awe-inspiring in their size and dimensions, and yet one looks in vain for any unnecessary waste of materials or money. Every stone is in its proper place and every inch of surface and space value has been carefully considered and accurately worked out by those builders.

New Delhi affords the contrast in a striking manner. The two massive piles of masonry on either side of the path leading to the Secretariat buildings are sheer waste of stone, mortar and brick. They have not enhanced the frontage in any way except adding to the bulk of the buildings. The railings round the circle opposite could have been of a better copy of the old Buddhist railings than they are at present, and a little more art could have been introduced to make them beautiful. The fountains could easily have been of better design and of a little more ornamental character. The rooms inside the Secretariat could have been more oriental in style and a little more artistic design could have been effected in the interior of these buildings.

The Government House is an imposing structure, commanding a magnificent view and affording a grand background for the city. It contains more rooms than Buckingham Palace and certainly looks more dignified and majestic with its white dome and tall pillars. But, is Indian art so poor that it could not design a more beautiful mansion, at a less cost, for the Viceroy's residence than the present one? The Council chamber is an ambitious attempt to be unique and original, but as an achievement a glorious failure. As it stands at present it looks,

to use a crude but expressive phrase, "a bald affair". From a distance the whole building looks like an enormous Roman stadium; a nearer view is still more disappointing. A third circle on the top may, perhaps, make it look better, like the Coloseum, but as an attempt on the part of British architects to build something stupendous, it is a miserable failure.

The British genius is for colonising, for road-making, for law and order, but certainly not for city building. New Delhi is a proof of their incompetence to build grandly, nobly and beautifully. The prophesy made by Havell of the dismal failure of New Delhi has come too true. He protested in vain and fought single-handed the powers that be against this foreign imposition of an unworthy capital on India, which he considered scandalous and a monstrous waste of public money. His cry was a cry in the wilderness. Other lovers of Indian art have equally condemned this new city which has no meaning nor message to the Indian people. I have seen New Delhi rise from its foundations to its present plight of a soulless city, and all that I can say is: Alas, for the wasted opportunity!

## *ON THE HILL-TOP OF SANCHI*

ONE of the pleasures of a wandering life is that you come upon new surprises in old places, familiar faces in unexpected corners and strange experiences in commonplace surroundings. The Sanchi that I knew a quarter of a century ago was a mass of ruins amidst thick-growing shrubs, with fragments of sculptured stones and pillars strewn about. The restoration of the monuments had just begun under the care and supervision of Sir John Marshall, and the whole place was in great confusion. The Sanchi Tope today presents a new appearance with the ancient monuments completely restored and renovated, the place cleared of its debris and wild plants, with a well laid-out garden and neat narrow paths leading all over the ruins.

There is a small museum near by, which contains precious pieces of sculpture found on the spot, and an intelligent curator to look after them. There are two good rest-houses at the foot of the hillock, and the railway authorities run a refreshment stall at the station. A regular stream of tourists and students visit it throughout the year. The little mound, with its wonderful monuments, has now become a world-famous place of pilgrimage, and its fame is as widely known as either Ajanta or Madura.

The little hillock on which these ruins lie rises imperceptibly from the low-lying valley that surrounds it and commands a magnificent panoramic view. In the distance are the low hills that encircle the valley below, over which the sun sets every evening in gorgeous splendour. The site of the ancient city of Wessanagara (Besnagar) and the monolithic pillar of Heliodores lie not far off from

this place, and the old highway connecting Pataliputra and Ujjain runs near by overgrown with jungle trees. The village of Sanchi rests peacefully under the shadow of these mighty monuments, and there is the quietness of the old world all around. The tiny crawling train that winds its way through the narrow valley close by does not disturb the hoary peacefulness of the place.

Your mind takes a retrospective view of history and a glorious past unfolds itself. The great Mauryan Empire is slowly declining and the Kushan period has not yet dawned. The *stupa* stands in solitary grandeur, a fitting crown to the conical shaped hill, raised here (somewhere about 500 B.C.) by loving hands and devoted hearts, to enshrine the relics of Sariputta and Mohalanna. The great Asoka sojourns here for a while, (about 250 B.C.) on his way from Pataliputra to Ujjain, and orders the railings to be erected round the *stupas* and monasteries for the *Bhikkhus,* and the place from that time comes to be known widely in the Buddhist world as Chaityagiri, or the hill of *chaityas.* Buddha-ghosha later visits it from Wessanagara. Other kings follow, and about the 1st century A.D. we see the exquisitely sculptured *toranas* rise up and adorn the place, and thus Sanchi becomes a powerful centre of religion and art. But soon time casts her spell, and all the glories of Sanchi vanish into oblivion, and after several centuries their vanished grandeur peeps through broken fragments and ruined walls.

Sanchi was first brought to the notice of modern man somewhere about the middle of the last century, and since then it has become a landmark in the historical development of Indian art. Bharhut in Bagelkhand and Sanchi in Bhopal are the most famous monuments of the post-Mauryan and pre-Kushan periods, and therefore the earliest of the ancient Buddhist remains in India. They

represent the earliest and most magnificent examples of Buddhist architecture and sculpture in India. The *stupas* at Sarnath, Landi Kotal, Kusinagara, Amaravati, Gaya and other places are of the same structural type but of a later date.

A *stupa* or *tope* is a funeral mound raised over the remains of a great teacher or saint, and generally enshrines a bone relic of the departed person. When after the death of the Lord Buddha his body was cremated and the bones and ashes were divided among the kingdoms of that period, a stupa was erected over each of those relics to preserve them for posterity. The earliest of these structures were of mere brick and rubble, resting on a basement of one or more square terraces, surrounded by a paved circle for circumambulation.

The *stupa* at Sanchi is a solid, truncated hemisphere, rising from the ground-line to a height of about 45 feet, 110 feet in diameter at the base and 34 at the summit. The basement terrace is reached by a double staircase. In the centre is a shaft, an inner mound of brickwork laid in mud, then lose stones and rubble, and over it a casing of dressed stones about 8 inches thick, laid one over the other in horizontal layers; the exterior is afterwards coated with plaster to a thickness of about 4 inches and polished. Then the whole dome is painted in rich colours with beautiful geometrical and other symbolical designs. Bits of faded colour are still to be seen on the stupa. The finial over the top consists of a pediment and an umbrella-shaped piece of stonework. The basement has a palisaded enclosure, semi-circular and semi-elliptical in shape, with four entrances, at the end of each of which stands a most magnificently carved gateway, *torana,* of the same style as that of Bharhut. Resting against the basement, opposite each entrance, is an *alto relievo* figure of the Buddha under a carved niche.

The *toranas* form the most interesting feature of the architectural and sculptural arts of the place. They are unique in their conception and wonderful in their execution. They form the archetype for subsequent developments in the Far East and are by themselves the most original and vital form of early Buddhist sculpture. The pillars are covered profusely with relief carvings in oblong panels, illustrating incidents from the life of the Lord Buddha and from the Jataka stories, and also with richly designed floral ornamentation in which the lotus and honeysuckle are the predominant motif.

The long serpentine scroll, which takes in its moving sweep birds, flowers and plants, making a rhythmic decorative design of great beauty and charm; the "disc and crescent" ornamentation that sets off the elaborate carvings of group figures in the panels above and below; the "lion capitals" that are so idealistically realistic, the studies in stone of animals and birds, so truthful to nature and life—all these indicate, not the beginnings of early Buddhist art, as imagined by some critics, but a mastery over technique and perfection of a form of plastic art, whose very origin is lost in the labyrinth of time. We observe not the origin, but the elaboration of the art of stone carving in ancient India.

Fergusson rightly remarked: "Some animals, such as elephant, deer, monkeys, are better represented here than in any sculpture known in any part of the world; so, too, are some trees, and architectural details are cut with an elegance and precision that are admirable. The human figures too, though very different from our standard of beauty and grace, are truthful to nature and where grouped together, continue to express the action intended with singular felicity. For an honest, purpose-like, pre-Raphaelitic kind of art, there is probably nothing much better to be found elsewhere." "The earliest reliefs,"

writes another well-known art-critic, referring to the sculptures at Sanchi, "are in silhouette, without any differentiation of planes, the only approach to modelling appearing in the rounding of the contour. The feet are always in side view. Other reliefs exhibit much greater knowledge of the figures, of spatial relations, and represent pose and movement with conscious grace. The reliefs of the *toranas* are marvels of decorative composition. The more extended compositions are on the *torana* architraves and here a whole succession of scenes to a given event is represented within a single frame, the presence of Buddha being indicated by an appropriate symbol."

The broken Asokan pillar, the fairly well preserved railings round the second *stupa*, with their excellent medallion-carvings, the temple of the Gupta period, the numerous sculptural figures, the beautifully finished pottery and other finds from the buried monuments, all are mute witnesses to the glorious art-heritage of India.

## *IN HOLI KASHI*

Coeval with the oldest of the world's cities and contemporaneous with the dimly remembered centres of civilisation of Assyria, Babylon, Nineveh, Egypt, Greece, and Rome, Kashi is still the eternal city of the world. Ancient as the hills and immortal like the goods, Kashi challenges both time and fate. She has seen nations rise and fall, empires rule and decline, civilisations grow and decay, humanity come and go, but she stands for ever wonderfully serene, silent and sage-like with her hoary wisdom and solemn silence.

The glories of Thebes and Memphis, of Antioch and Crete, of Persepolis and the Parthenon, of Taksashila and Nalanda, of Maya and Kanchi, of Ujjain and Vikramasila, are now known by their monuments, dug out of the debris by the spade of the archaeologist; the glory of Kashi, however, continues to be an enchanting mystery, ever-living, defying time and change. The past and present here are linked up in an inscrutable way by their sanctity, antiquity and association, and it is difficult to say when, where and at what period, life and religion started here and how much of the past is the present and how much of the present is of the past.

Kashi is not only the stronghold of Hinduism, the oldest of the living faiths, but the birthplace of religions; and India's greatest seers and philosophers, saints, prophets and teachers, have sanctified this place by their holy presence; she has been from time immemorial a great seat of learning and an abode for scholars, poets and artists. The devotion of the millions has from dim antiquity been directed towards this great religious centre, and even today she is the world's oldest and great-

est place of pilgrimage. To the Hindu, she is the city of his hopes and dreams, and to die here is for him to attain immortality; to the pious-minded, it is the city that washes away one's sins by a dip in the sacred Ganges; to the Pandit, the place to win laurels and to attain fame; to the scholar, the historian and the antiquarian, a fertile field for research, study and contemplation.

The student of art too has his Mecca here. An ancient city like Benares affords rich and fruitful material for a lifetime study to one interested in the fine arts. The archaeologists have not sufficiently unearthed the hidden glories of this ancient city, but there is no doubt that Benares has been a city of palaces and temples right through her existence. The two oldest classics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, give glowing descriptions of the old grandeur of the city and its architecture. The Chinese travellers, Fa Hian and Houen Tsang, describe in praise and admiration the stately buildings and the gorgeous temples that once adorned "the city of Varanasi." The temples that were destroyed by Auranga-zeb and what remains of them today reveal great architectural beauties; the ruins of the Buddhistic monastery in Sarnath, near by, only attest to the ancient greatness of Benares. The latter-day temples, erected by Queen Ahalya Bai, on the river-front, which are now crumbling down and lie strewn along the river in titanic splendour, were wonderful masterpieces of temple architecture. The massive polygonal pillars, the chastely carved figures on the friezes of the walls, the richly sculptured shrines, all these show remarkable progress and achievement in the art of building mighty temples even during the darker periods through which the country had passed.

Benares, in spite of filth and dirt, poverty and disease, the nuisance of pilgrims and tourists, is still a city of enchantment. There is a mystic atmosphere about this

ancient city which no sensitive person can fail to sense, especially as one sails down the river in an open boat at the time of sunset. The thousands of pilgrims on the ghats in their variegated colours, the stone steps leading from the river to the shrines and houses, the spires of temples and mosques, the temple bells, the sound of chant music from the distance, the soft, glowing sunset that steals over the deepening gloom of the evening, and above all, your own contemplative mood and introspective mind make you sense, in a very real manner, the mystic atmosphere that broods over Kashi. For once the wonder ceases and you realise the true holiness of the place, adored and magnetized by the devotion of the millions for ages past.

Modern Benares is not without its interest to the student of art, and there are enough fragmentary pieces of exquisite works of art of various kinds to attract his attention and careful observation. The narrow stone-paved alleys and lanes that lead from the ghats are full of interest to those who go with eyes open. The architraves, balustrades, columns, doors, eaves of cornices, foliated gable-ends, pierced window-screens in sandstone and in marble, the stucco-work hanging high on the walls, these and a thousand and one pretty little things make the streets attractive and interesting. The kinkhab (brocades) manufacturers are by themselves a great attraction to the lover of the beautiful in fabrics. And above all, there is the Hindu University, with its magnificent buildings of fine Hindu architecture, and open grounds for play and recreation of the gay student population, a modern achievement of no mean order.

But the most famous and highly interesting place for the archaeologist and student of art is, of course, the far-famed Sarnath, where the Lord Buddha preached His first sermon to His five disciples, after His illumination

under the Bodhi Tree in Buddha Gaya. This most sacred spot to the Buddhists was once a powerful centre of influence and a place of pilgrimage. The great Asoka raised one of his wonderful stone pillars on the spot where the Lord set His Wheel of Law rolling and where He sojourned for a time during His earthly life, now nearly two thousand five hundred years ago. A big monastery grew up round the place, and a great *stupa* was built to enshrine His sacred relics in later years. All that now remains of them are the sites of the monasteries, the broken pieces of the Asokan Pillar and the images of the Buddha dug out of the ruins.

To the student of Indian sculpture, the place is full of absorbing interest and the fragments that have been collected and kept in the museum here are deserving of a careful study. Three great masterpieces of stone sculpture are sure to draw the attention of any discerning student of art. The well-known capital in red stone that once graced the top of the pillar of Asoka is a supreme achievement in sculptural art. The theory of its Assyrian origin, propounded by the early European scholars, may be brushed aside. It is purely Indian, and, moreover, worthy of the age it represented. The lions are chiselled in such an idealistically realistic manner that it amazes one with its lifelikeness as well as with its symbolic significance. The treatment and the finish are of a very high order, and the smoothness of the surface is something incredibly wonderful, considering the age when it was done. The four lions, which carried the abacus, over which was the Wheel of Law, are treated with a strength and majesty characteristic of the king of the beasts, and their powerful paws are delineated with an eye for anatomical accuracy and observation of nature.

The next gem of art in the collection is the equally well known and much admired statue of the Buddha

preaching His first sermon. The seated figure of the Lord, with His hands in the teaching mudra (gesture), is an exquisitely finished work. The expression of an inner serenity and an outer compassion, the restraint and repose of the vibrant body and the divinely-lit smile on the face are executed with such mastery and skill that it stands, most unquestionably as one of the noblest and finest works of sculptural art. The lotus on which the Lord is seated, the *prabha* in the background, and the worshipping figures of the five disciples to whom He first preached, are decorative elements that enhance its beauty, apart from their significance.

The third sculpture is the large standing figure of the Bodhisattva, which even in its present mutilated condition looks striking and beautiful. There are others of equal merit and artistic value: the panels with bas-reliefs illustrating the birth, illumination and the *nirvana* of the Buddha; the broken torso of a female figure, the big statue of a king of the Sunga dynasty, etc. A visit to this collection will help one to understand and appreciate their beauty, and with a little intelligent interest and a critical attitude one can soon learn to know and appreciate the hidden meaning and purpose of Indian sculptural art.

## *AMONG THE RUINS OF ANCIENT MAGADHA*

MAGADHA was the pride of ancient India. Of the great empires that enriched her history, the kingdom of Magadha was, perhaps, the greatest in Buddhist times, and was certainly as great and powerful as the later empires of the Andhras and the Guptas.

The history of Magadha is the history of ancient India: her greatness was India's greatness. The Magadha kingdom was the stronghold of Buddhism, and the conversion of one of its greatest kings resulted in the rapid spread of that faith. King Bimbisara was a wise monarch, and his beautiful capital Rajagriha was one of the leading cities of the world of that period. It was built amidst picturesque surroundings of low hills and side-valleys, with hot springs; the city itself containing magnificent mansions and well laid-out parks and streets.

The site of that ancient capital evokes even now a deep sense of reverence and aesthetic joy, both by its splendid isolated location and its close association with the life and teachings of the Lord Buddha. The Magadha Empire had other great cities which grew into fame and have since become sacred and historical.

The wonderful spot where the Lord attained enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree which now goes by the name of Buddha Gaya; that famous seat of learning of olden days, to which students and scholars flocked in their hundreds from all the corners of Asia,—the university town of Nalanda; the glorious capital of Asoka, Pataliputra, which was the admiration of the world till as late as the seventh century A.D., when Houen Tsang, the Chinese traveller, visited and described it; Vaisali, where the courtesan Ambapalli lived and poets and philosophers

thronged to be patronised by its monarchs—these are some of the forgotten glories of ancient Magadha; and a traveller visiting them today cannot help being elated at the mere sight and memory of them. But to artists and historians, these places have not only mere hallowed associations but are centres of inspiration and education. Though buried and forgotten for ages, they yet fascinate the modern student with an inscrutable mystery and an irresistible archaic beauty that are at once noble, bewildering and inspiring.

The oldest of the monuments now left of this once famous city are the rock-cut caves in the hills. Architecturally they belong to the same period as the oldest caves at Ajanta, that is the third century B.C., or thereabouts. The ruins of the city are lost under the debris and no excavations have so far been possible. The hot springs are a great attraction, and are considered to possess healing properties. It is slowly developing into a kind of Spa, and the rest-house near the springs is generally full in certain seasons of the year. A narrow-gauge light railway runs between Baktiarpur Junction, on the main line of the East Indian Railway, and Rajagriha, passing through the site of Nalanda. But a more convenient and comfortable way of visiting these two places is by motor either from Patna or Gaya on a fairly level road.

The site of the great University of Nalanda is slowly being recovered to view, and a large number of interesting finds are being made day by day. Considerable progress has been made by the Archaeological Department in their work of unearthing a large portion of the monastery, and the finds recovered reveal wonderful architectural and sculptural works. The excavations round the central shrine have progressed very much since I last saw them years ago, and many interesting pieces of

sculpture have since been recovered. The small museum near the offices contains some very fine stone carvings though not properly classified and arranged. The Patna Museum will soon be enriched by these treasures of art and the student of Indian sculpture will have fresh materials to aid him in his study.

Pataliputra, the once famous capital of Chandragupta and Asoka, described by the Greek Ambassador Megasthenes as a city more magnificent than any he knew in his own country, is now represented by a few fragments of stone, a smooth highly polished pillar of great length and massiveness but broken into pieces, and a few wooden rafters and pillars. The excavations are not sufficient to show anything of the vastness of the city, or to reveal any striking works of art. The monolithic pillar now lying on the ground is of the same type as the other Asokan pillars at Sarnath and Prayag, but much more massive and smooth.

The story that these pillars with their capitals and the art of dressing and polishing them (their arrangement being similar to those at Persepolis), were copied from Persia, is another of the fanciful theories of European students of Indian art. The huge stones of the walls of the old city lying about the site are as smoothly polished and finished as the pillar itself, which fact alone belies the above theory.

Kautilya's 'Artha-Sastra' gives a detailed description of how ancient cities were built; and as he was the minister of Chandragupta, it is to be presumed that Pataliputra was also built according to the traditions indicated in that treatise. As Havell pointed out, "Indian history did not begin with Chandragupta, and the Indo-Aryan building tradition was an ancient one when Pataliputra was founded."

The great illumination came to the royal searcher

after Truth, the glorious prince of the Sakya clan, Siddhartha, under the shade of a Peepul tree, which has also attained immortality with the divine teacher whom it sheltered. Near by nestles the little village of Urvila, where the milkmaid Sujata restored the famished body of the Bodhisattva by her offerings of milk and rice before his final quest and triumph under the Bodhi Tree. This holy tree and the spot where the Lord attained Buddhahood were marked, and a beautiful temple was erected on the sanctified ground by the Emperor Asoka. A monastery grew round it later on and splendid devotion centred round the spot for over two thousand years.

The temple itself was an unique work of architecture as its present restoration shows, and the innumerable figures that were set up in the niches mark the high standard and excellence of workmanship. The railings that run round the central shrine are of the same type as those at Bharhut and Sanchi and belong almost to the same age. The carved Buddhas on the cupolas, in the niches and friezes are fine examples of the art of the stone-cutter of that period and are superior in many respects to the much-advertised Gandharan sculptures.

A few superb examples taken out of the excavations here are to be seen in the museums in Calcutta and Patna. The image of the Buddha inside the temple is much disfigured by the foolish devotion of priests and worshippers, who adorn it with silks, jewels and flower offerings. The incense smoke and the candle burning add to the vulgarity. The temple tower is a successful restorative work and a good copy of what the original must have been.

But the most scandalous and depressing thing about this place is that a Hindu Mahant is still the virtual possessor of this most sacred place to the Buddhists. The sooner it is restored to them, who long for its possession,

the better it will be for all concerned.

A morning visit to this thrice blessed spot is an unforgettable experience. The air is cool and fresh; the morning wind blows gently and the leaves of the sacred tree make melodious music. The pilgrims are already at their worship. Men, women and children make their prostrations before the Bo Tree, chanting hymns and offering flowers. What a cosmopolitan crowd they are! The travel-stained Tibetans from the far-off Himalaya, with their dirty haversacks and prayer-wheels; the gay-coloured and cleanly clothed men and women from Burma, with their rich offerings; the Chinese and Japanese Buddhists, in their flowing robes and flowery *kimonas;* the mild-mannered Sinhalese with their uncut hair tied into knots and held fast by upturned tortoise-shell combs and their bright coloured sarangs; the modern tourists of varied nationalities with their profane cameras and tiffin baskets—all these constitute the daily floating population of Buddha Gaya. But amidst all these external shows, sounds and sights, there is an inner quietness and subtle spiritual atmosphere pervading the whole place, and for a moment, when the mind is stilled and the heart is calm, one senses the supreme sanctity of the place in its overbrooding peace which is not of this world. This really is the secret of Gaya's greatness.

## *GLIMPSES OF THE GLORIES OF ORISSA*

ORISSA, poor and backward now, was once a powerful kingdom, with a history dating back to the time of the Pandavas. During the Buddhist period of Indian history it was an important provincial kingdom ruled over by a Governor; and it was the defeat of the Kalingas by Asoka in this region that brought about his conversion to Buddhism. The oldest Buddhist caves in India are situated here. There is a tradition that the Yavanas ruled over this country for some time. Later a powerful dynasty arose and reigned for six centuries and left a deep impress of its sway in the beautiful monuments that one still sees today.

The past history of Utkal (Orissa) is the story of the rise and growth of this dynasty, founded by Yayati Kesari, and known to history as the Kesari dynasty. Buddhist influence began gradually to wane during the period of this Hindu kingdom, and the great temple at Puri was restored to its earlier grandeur. The Gangas who came from the south and introduced Vaishnavism ruled this tract for over four centuries, till petty chieftains rose among them, and caused civil wars and political confusion, which resulted in the invasion of Orissa by the Afghans about the beginning of the sixteenth century. Then the Moghuls came, the Mahrattas after, and lastly the British. Over three hundred years of intercinine war, pestilence, famine and poverty, reduced the country to its present state, with some petty zamindars to feed fat upon the toil of some of the most poverty-stricken and famished peasantry in the world.

Poor as the province is in material wealth or culture, it is rich in architectural monuments of the past.

The oldest Buddhist caves so far discovered are located not far from Bhuvaneshvar. They are on two small hillocks that rise out of a wild jungle below, and are known as Udayagiri and Khandagiri. A passable road, about six miles from the town of Bhuvaneshvar, leads you to the foot of the caves, and a good travellers' bungalow lies to the left amidst picturesque surroundings. The ascent to the caves is not difficult and there is nothing worth noting in most of them except the antiquity of the caves, with some crude carvings, which date from about 500 B.C. There are small cells with no carvings of any kind, indicating primitive cave-dwellings. Some have pillared verandahs and others friezes and relief carvings, showing gradual development in the arts of architecture and sculpture.

The most notable of them is the two-storeyed building known as Rani Gumpha, and it has some interesting sculptures in *bas-relief*. Some of the caves in the Udayagiri hill, which is separated from Khandagiri by a narrow gorge, are fantastic and elemental in appearance, like the Tiger Cave, which when seen from far looks like a tiger with wide open mouth, powerful jaws, terrifying eyes, nose and teeth, overhanging the entrance. The rock itself is so formed as (with a little clever touch of the stone-cutter) to produce this fantastic effect. These caves indicate interesting phases of the art of stone-carving and form a useful background for the study of the rock-cut temples in India.

The temples at Bhuvaneshvar represent the high-water-mark of Orissan art; a close study of some of them clearly shows this art in its various styles and in different stages of development. The present big temple of Shiva is believed to have been built by the founder of the Kesari dynasty. It is said that once there were over five thousand temples in the vicinity of modern Bhuvaneshvar.

A glance from one of the smaller towers over the surrounding country confirms this tradition. Countless shrines and *sikharas* peep through parched jungles; the beautiful big tank near by enhances the attraction of the place.

The temple architecture of Orissa is typical of the northern Hindu style and forms as interesting complement to the *gopurams* of South Indian temples. The curvilinear-shaped towers, with their bulging vertical ribs and amalki finials, compare favourably in majesty and grandeur with the pyramidal *pagodas* and their *kalasams* of the South. The stucco work on the face of the *gopurams* of the Dravidian temples is not so elegant and refined and rich as the carvings of the Orissan temples. The delightfully designed Mukteswar temple, with its lovely porch and *torana;* the richly ornamental and elaborately sculptured shrine of Rajarani; and the Great Temple, with its high tower, are the best examples of their kind. There are exquisitely designed floral friezes and animal carvings in the big temple; several more than life-size figures of gods and goddesses of excellent workmanship fixed all round the central pagoda; the figure of Surya with his attendant Aruna, carved in black stone, is one of the striking pieces of sculpture to be seen here. The courtyard contains several small shrines elaborately carved and beautifully finished, and also fragments of broken stones alive with *mithuna* figures of men, women and animals.

The phrase "Car of Juggernaut" has made the temple at Puri widely known. This "Car of Juggernaut" is supposed to represent a feature of Hindu religious life, and it is a pity that it is used freely and maliciously, unquestioned and unrefuted. The significance attached to the words, (the self-immolation of Hindu pilgrims before the festival car carrying the image of Jagannath by getting

crushed under its heavy, ponderous wheels), exists no more, nor did it ever exist as part of the religious life of the people. A few frenzied fanatics—a common phenomenon in all religions—may have laid themselves before the car and been killed at some times in the long history of this temple, lasting over twelve centuries or more, but to make it appear as a religious institution is positively mischievous.

In spite of the filth and vulgarity associated with this temple, Puri remains one of the most remarkable places of pilgrimage in the world. It is the most democratic place of worship, where the prince and the peasant, pariah and priest, partake of the same food and forget, for the time being, their social and class differences. It is the one temple in India which is really the temple of the people, where the *panchama* (so called untouchable) is the equal of the brahmin, and where the deity is the Lord of the universe, not Shiva or Vishnu or Brahma.

The present worship in the temple was instituted in later centuries, when Vaishnavism began to spread rapidly in Bengal and Kalinga and when the influence of saints like Kabir and Chaitanya began to affect people's thoughts and lives. Puri must also have been a powerful centre of Tantric worship after the decline of Buddhism. There is a tradition that it was a great place of pilgrimage for Buddhists and that a relic of the Buddha was enshrined here. Even today the worship at Puri is more cosmopolitan than either at Kashi or Rameshwaram.

The temple itself is a 12th century structure, in the accepted Orissan style, and stands in the middle of a large courtyard surrounded by a number of smaller shrines. There are the usual hall of audience, the hall of offerings, the pillared hall, and the inner sanctuary. The carvings on the sides of the pagoda, which is conical and curvilinear in shape, with Vishnu's wheel and flag

on the top, are not elaborate and rich as in the temple at Bhuvaneshvar, but contain some large nude "sex-act" figures, which puzzle and worry European visitors.

In fact, all Orissan temples, and especially the one at Konarak, are richly and minutely carved with these figures, and whatever may be their reaction on the minds of Christians and other non-Hindus, the Hindu devotees seem to be little affected by these carvings. Truth to tell, they seldom look at them or allow their minds to be corrupted by them. The object of their visit to the temple is for a different purpose and they are generally lost in their worship. It is the curious minded and sophisticated people who imagine all kinds of obscenities, indecencies and corruption in them.

To the Hindu, a temple is a microcosm, a miniature cosmos, wherein all life finds expression and therefore all things, plant life, animal life, human life and even the lives of the gods find representation in their manifold aspects; while the innermost sanctuary, the holy of holies, is in all the temples a small, dark cell with no embellishments of any kind. The worshipper's attention is ever drawn to and generally centres round this *garbhagraha* and his mind is not allowed to wander about on the externals that surround the shrine. They, in fact, symbolise the nature of the universe, with its outer attractions, which ever lead the senses astray, and its inner simplicity, which is the very nature of life and truth. From the point of view of art, they reveal a commendable mastery of human anatomy and bodily form in different poses and movements on the part of those ancient sculptors. The myth that Indian craftsmen were and are poor in their knowledge of anatomy stands exposed in a remarkable manner by these carvings.

My glimpse of the famous Black Pagoda of Konarak was on a cold wintry morning through hazy mists from a

distance of about two miles. It peeped through a small cluster of casuarina trees veiled by thin mists, for our way lay through sandy tracks, intercepted here and there by casuarina groves; herds of swift-footed bucks and doe darted hither and thither startled by our intrusion. The bullock carts that had carried us and our provisions all through the night from Puri followed us slowly behind. We arrived in time to see a batch of American visitors off, and took possession of the travellers' bungalow to ourselves. We were a party of three, two men and a lady, and soon established ourselves for a week's stay. The temple was only a stone's throw from our rest house, and daily did we explore the ruins and study their marvellous sculptures in detail.

There is no temple in all India like the Black Pagoda, unique in its wealth of carvings, its solitary grandeur, and in its being dedicated to the Sun god. The Martand temple in the Kashmir valley may or may not be a Sun temple, but this one certainly is. It faces the east and greets the Sun god every day as he ascends in his fiery golden chariot over the blue waves and rides across the sky in his resplendent glory. We saw a sunrise, one early morning, from the top of the tower, and the impression was profound and compelling, though different from that one gets either from the Tiger Hill in Darjeeling or from a boat on the Ganges in Benares.

One can easily, with a little artistic imagination, picture to oneself Usha's silvery mantle spreading itself before the receding darkness, the Aswin's glorious forms riding over the prancing steeds of white waves, and then a moment later, the god Surya himself rising out of the ocean in bejewelled splendour. Bathed in the morning rays of the sun, the temple puts on a supernal appearance and the scattered ruins all around illumine themselves, and though there is no more chanting of hymns,

burning of incense, ringing of bells, flower and fruit offerings, nor a gay throng of worshippers, one feels all the solemnity of a religious ritual in that silence.

Who carved this temple and why did they raise this magnificent monument on this spot? Was there a great city near by, and which king ordered its building? From where were the stones brought and who were the artists? To all these questions, the archaeologists and historians give only vague answers. The *pagoda* stands mute, a marvel of human devotion and skill.

The Black Pagoda is a pyramidal structure, rising in three terraces, with a lotus-crowned pinnacle, and is elaborately carved with figures of elephants, horses, warriors, chariots, in regular procession and with amazing lifelikeness. The pagoda is supported by eight richly carved wheels, which are, in themselves, gems of art. Most of these represent the much discussed "indecent" scenes; in fact, almost all the minute carvings are of this nature. There are carvings of like nature in high and low reliefs covering the exterior of the temple.

The four entrances, though much of them are in ruins, contain finely polished blue-black stone lintels with iron beams resting on them. Pairs of huge lions, horses, etc., are to be seen near each one of the entrances —great masterpieces of stone-carving full of animation and feeling. The hall of audience, though crumbled and perished, reveals its former beauty in the fragments lying about. The image of Surya with Aruna and the prancing horses still dominate the walls. For richness, elaborateness and riotous ornamentation, the only temples in India that can be compared with this are the Hoysala temples of Halebid, Belur and Somnathpur in the Mysore State and the Jain temples at Mount Abu. Between the daringly conceived and powerfully sculptured caves of Elephanta and Ellora and the delicately designed and

cunningly carved temples of Konarak and Halebid, lies a whole world of evolution of the architectural art. What a glorious world to explore!

## *WITHIN THE FRESCOED WALLS OF AJANTA*

THE caves of Ajanta are unique among man-made temples even in this land of mighty monuments and great architectural achievements. They stand in symbolic relation to the great snowy Himavat in their vastness, sublimity, majesty and mystery. They are epic in their grandeur and form the classical background for the plastic arts of India, even as the Vedas and the Upanishads form the classical background for the mind and soul of India. Ajanta epitomises, in its architecture, sculpture and painting, the most glorious period in Indian history, the Gupta period of the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th centuries A.D. We get a glimpse here of the high standard of the culture and civilisation of the people then and the perfected state of their arts and crafts. Few countries in the world possess such a rich art heritage as this ancient land, and no achievement of the ancients, either in India or elsewhere, can surpass or equal this. Ajanta is the wonder of India.

These caves lie in a secluded ravine in the Indhyari range of hills, in the north of Nizam's Dominion. A more magnificent and sublime situation for these monasteries it is impossible to conceive! It far surpasses in its solitary grandeur and serene seclusion even the far-famed temple of Martand in Kashmir, which has one of the finest and the most beautiful situations for a temple in the world.

There are three main ways of approach to the Ajanta caves, all leading to the village of Faradapur, where are the dak bungalow and the Government Guest House and where visitors have to camp before they go to see the

caves. The easiest way is to alight at Jalgaon on the G. I. P. Railway line, some 230 miles from Bombay, and take a motor to Faradapur, a distance of 36 miles. Another way is to change at Panchora Junction on the same line, take a branch line to Pahur, and thence by motor or bullock cart, a distance of 10 miles. The third route is by motor from Aurangabad to Ajanta village, a distance of 60 miles.

From the camp to the caves, a distance of three miles, a good road runs through low-lying hills, amidst fields of maize and corn and flowering shrubs of *parijatak*, which abounds on the sides of the hills. The very entrance to the ravine is beautiful and romantic. At a distance you hear the rumbling noise of the waterfall and near by the water of the river Beghora gurgling over pebbles and rocks. Birds of bright plumage, emerald parrots, yellow-crested wagtails, blue-throated pigeons, white-coloured monarchs flit and fly, dart and shoot before you, behind you and all about you. The king eagle circles above in the giddy heights with its eerie cry, and little animals run about in all directions. There is solemn stillness everywhere; quietness reigns all round you. You feel the awful ancient mystery of the caves at their very entrance. Those monks who selected this grand spot must have been gods in their spiritual stature, you instinctively say to yourself. A more ideal place for retreat, meditation and contemplation it is impossible to imagine.

The road ends on the left bank of the river, which has cut the ravine through its age-long course, and as you ascend the stone-cut steps and look in front of you, the gorgeous vision of these rock-hewn temples opens out before you and overpowers you for a moment. You stand still in a contemplative mood before this mighty achievement of your great ancestors and feel a thrill of joy at the thought that they are your heritage,

but, alas! only to feel the next moment the utter shame of your unworthiness and your great fall from that mighty state!

The Ajanta caves are world-famous for their rock-cut temples and the most interesting fresco paintings on their walls. The caves are 28 in number, some *chaityas* (cathedrals) and others *viharas* (monasteries), all cut into the living rock on the face of the cliff which runs along the ravine in a perfect horse-shoe shaped curve. They were sculptured and painted somewhere between the 3rd century B.C. and the 7th century A.D., and were lost to the world for over twelve centuries. They were discovered for the first time to the modern world a little over a century ago.

The first copies of the paintings were made by Major Gill of the Madras Army and were sent to London for an exhibition, where they got accidentally burnt. The Government then deputed Mr. Griffiths of the School of Art, Bombay, to make fresh copies of the paintings; most of them met with a similar fate again in London. Mr. Griffiths, however, made other copies from his drawings and published his most sumptuous volume, which contain the best and truest copies of these frescoes. Lady Harringham led two expeditions, and with the assistance of the artists of the Tagore School of Painting, got them copied and published a volume through the India Society in 1915. The stone-cutters of Ajanta have shown no less skill in their craft than their brethren of the brush; and it will be worth while publishing a volume of the sculptural art of Ajanta as a companion volume to the two Government publications on the frescoes.

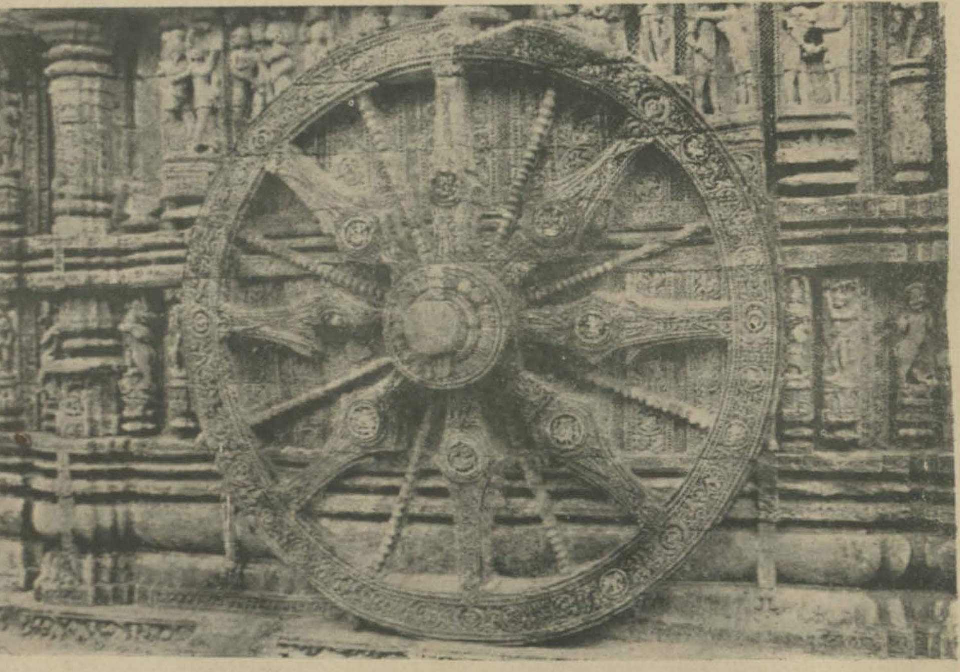
These fresco paintings have since then attracted the attention of artists and art-lovers all over the world, and the caves have become a great centre of pilgrimage and thousands visit them annually from every quarter of the



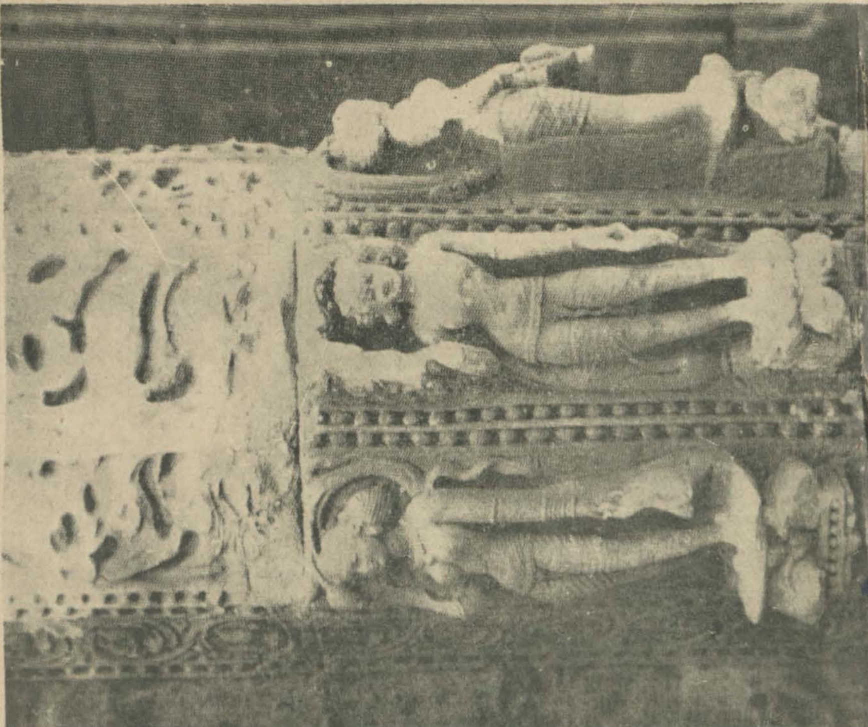
*Sanchi* *Peszkowski*



*Bhuvaneshwar (Orissa)*



*The Black Pagoda—Konarak*



*Detail*

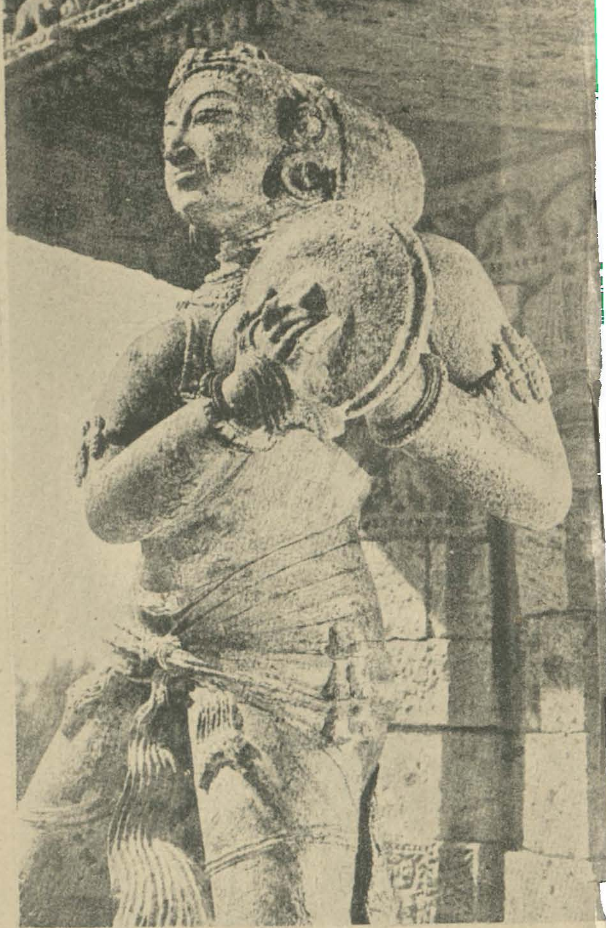


*Bhuvaneshwara*



*Khajuraho*
*Marg-Burnier*

*Kahjuraho Kali Temple*



Cymbal Player
Konarak

Marg-Burnier



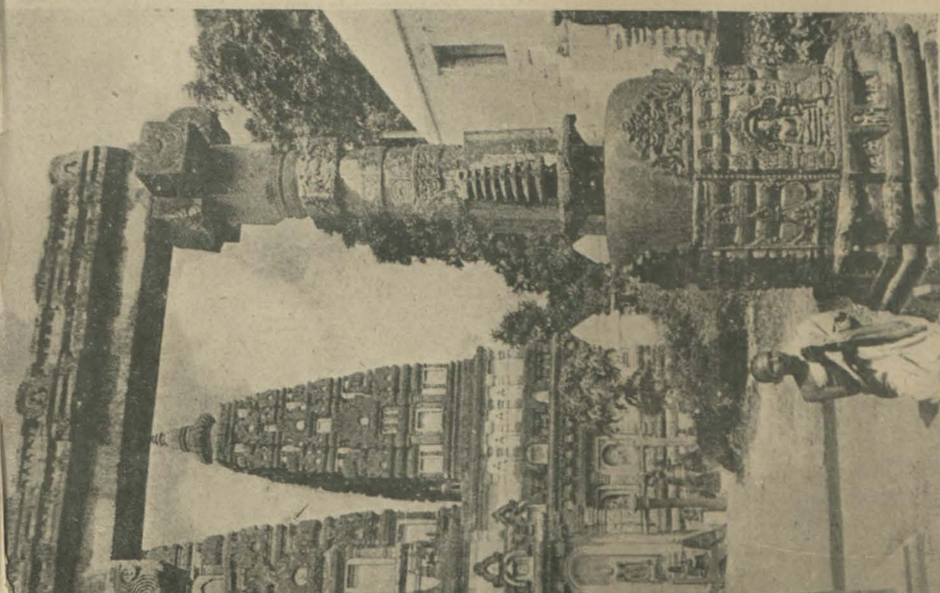
A Panel at Kajuraho

Fr. Heras



*An image from
Nalanda
Navin Gandhi*

*Buddha Gaya*





*Ajanta Fresco* *Copy by K. K. Hebbar*





*Ardhanarishwara—Elephanta*



*Durga—Ellora*

globe. European art-critics have given the most unstinted admiration and praise to the paintings to be seen on these walls, and artists from America and Japan have vied with one another in copying them. Indian artists are turning to them for inspiration. The little that remains today on the walls and ceilings and that has escaped the ravages of time and the vandalism of man is hardly one thousandth part of the original paintings that once decorated the walls, ceilings and pillars; and yet that little amazes modern artists.

These wall-paintings represent a unique phase of mural decorative art, and are, perhaps, the finest series of "primitive" mural paintings left for man. The Buddhist priest-artists who painted these great masterpieces in the early centuries of the Christian era, were not only great creative artists but interpretative geniuses. The truth and precision of their work are most admirable; the sweep of their brush is bold and vigorous, their colouring pure and fresh. Most of the paintings represent incidents from the *Jataka* stories of the Buddha, but the human figures, the background and other incidents of art, are copied direct from life as they observed it.

Nowhere in the world of art has woman been honoured, worshipped and immortalised as in Ajanta. Though the Lord Buddha was the inspirer of their art, woman was their chief decorative motif. Woman is the glory of Ajantan art. She is painted in all her moods, in innumerable graceful poses and in a thousand and one characteristic postures. "A garland of women" greets you at every turn, and a thousand bewitching eyes sparkle and smile at you all round. They fascinate you with their sinuous forms and languishing attitudes, they haunt you with their eternal femininity. You seem to hear their tinkling anklets, their soft whispers and their silvery laughter, not only in the caves as you look around the

walls but also in your deep sleep when your tired limbs and dazed brain have gone to rest. Woman, to these ancient artists of India, was not a temptress, a seducer to be shunned and avoided, but an eternal companion on the road of destiny, who ennobled and enlivened life's pathway. Ascetics as these artists were, they saw the divinity in womanhood, and hence this "worship of woman" at Ajanta.

The graceful poses, the natural attitudes and movements, the significantly spontaneous gestures, all these reveal the artists' keen observation, perception, visualisation and expression. Animals and flowers have received as much attention from these masters as either gods or men. Nothing was too insignificant for these artists, and in all their art we find that one great truth which India expounded in the dim past of her history, the Unity of Life.

The half-closed, elongated eyes, the wasp-like waists, the tapering fingers and other mannerisms, which are the characteristic features of Ajanta art are no mere conventions, but are suggestive of the artists' interpretation of the beautiful forms they saw around them, not only in the human but in the animal and vegetable kingdoms as well. This wider understanding and application of "art expression" gave them the richness and variety of artistic anatomy, which is the despair of modern art students.

Thus the art of Ajanta forms a fitting classical background for the art of painting in India, as grand, as mighty, as majestic, as deep and profound as her religions and philosophies. No nation of the modern world has a greater cultural heritage than India, and no nation has had a greater fall than this most unhappy land. Her glory is dawning again, and one of the forerunners of her forgotten splendour is Ajanta.

# THROUGH THE SCULPTURED GALLERIES OF ELLORA

"IT'S impossible that the human mind could have conceived and human hands could have executed this temple; it must be the work of the gods," exclaimed my friend, a young girl undergraduate from Sweden, standing before the temple of Kailas at Ellora. "That's what our traditions say," I jocularly added, "they go further and assert that it was raised by Viswakarma, the divine architect, in a single night." We both laughed, but understood each other. The modern university-trained and sceptically brought-up girl from the West and the ignorant, superstitious Hindu worshipper, both react in an almost identical manner before this amazing achievement of Indian art. Both echo the superhuman nature of the effort and accomplishment embodied in that magnificent creation. There is nothing like it in all India, so amazing, so awe-inspiring, so bewildering and so overpowering is this temple of Kailas.

Ajanta, its only rival in extent and nature, is more magnificently situated and possesses beautiful fresco paintings, but it has not the colossal character and the Himalayan magnitude of Ellora. Ajanta is also rich in sculptures but not to this extent and variety. Ajanta is purely Buddhist, while Ellora is Jain, Hindu and Buddhist. The crowning glory of Ellora is Kailas, a transcription in stone of a vision of the abode of Mahadev.

Like Ajanta, Ellora lies in the north of the Nizam's Dominion; in fact they lie within fifty miles of each other as the crow flies. Well-made roads connect the caves with the towns of Daulatabad (a distance of seven miles)

and Aurangabad (thirteen miles), which is the headquarters of one of the important districts in the Nizam's territory, and has an up-to-date hotel for visitors. The State maintains a good travellers' bungalow and a guest house at Ellora, which are situated on the crest of the hillock overlooking the valley.

A fine metalled road from Aurangabad skirts round the Fort of Daulatabad and after making slight ascent over a ghat road, descends to the valley and enters the face of the caves right in the middle where the Kailas stands. From one end of the caves to the other, north to south, a smooth well preserved road runs to a distance of about a mile and a half. The extreme right scarp in the south contains the oldest Buddhist caves, and the extreme left in the north contains the Jaina caves, while below the brow of the cliff in between these two are the Hindu rock-cut temples. There are twelve caves in the Buddhist series, seventeen in the Hindu, excluding several smaller ones, and five in the Jaina group at the extreme north.

Ajanta is the handiwork of both nature and man. The river Beghora there has furrowed the deep ravine into a horse-shoe curve in front of the caves, making them look a magnificent natural amphitheatre. Here, in Ellora, the caves are excavated in the face of a low-running hill from north to south, which throws out small spurs at either end. There is not the serenity, solemnity and supernal quietness of Ajanta here; the surroundings are plain and tiresome. The rainy season makes the place beautiful and cheerful with waterfalls, tiny cascades and running rivulets. But the marvel of the art of the sculptor and architect makes one forget the surroundings.

Over half the caves in Ellora contain large pieces of sculpture, and form perhaps one of the finest sculptural

galleries in the world. The caves No. 12 in the Buddhist series and No. 15 in the Hindu group are two-and-three-storeyed structures, respectively, all carved out of the living rock, with halls of many pillars, ornate capitals and innumerable figures of the Buddhas and Hindu gods and goddesses. The third storey in cave No. 12 has a unique portrait-gallery of statues, arranged in perfect order and properly lit by natural light as if they are arranged for an exhibition. There are ninety-eight statues and forty-eight pillars in that hall alone, not to speak of the sculptured friezes and chastely chiselled porches and entrances.

The treatment of the leaves of the Bo Tree, under which are seen seven Buddhas and the figure of a deer lying down near one of them, is masterly, all done in the manner characteristic of great art. The flying figures, the conventionally treated swans and lions, the four figures seated round the Buddha's feet and the picture of a girl offering flowers in cave No. 11 represent a high order of Indian sculpture. Cave No. 2 is a *chaitya* of twelve pillars with carved figures all round and a finely designed entrance; cave No. 5 is a big hall with twenty-four pillars with big round capitals; caves 6, 7, 8 and 10 contain niches with figures, stone carvings of lions, elephants, flying *apsaras* and seated Buddhas.

From cave No. 14 begins the Hindu series, which rival and even excel in beauty, skill and workmanship the foregoing caves of the Buddhist group. These Saivite caves are full of gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon, (illustrations of mythical legends and puranic stories), gigantic images of Shiva, Vishnu, Parvati, Lakshmi, all powerfully sculptured. For sheer power, strength, rhythm and movement, there are few works of sculptural art in the world to equal them. Western scholars see merely horror in them and consider them works of a diseased imagination and terror-stricken mind.

To the Hindu mind, however, they represent veritable cosmic truths and, therefore, worthy of artists' interpretation. A figure of Lakshminarayan, in cave No. 14, is a masterpiece, worthy to be ranked with that far-famed figure of Trimurti in the Elephanta caves. The cave No. 15 in this group is complementary to No. 12 in the Buddhist series; both contain galleries of beautifully carved statues arranged in proper order as if on show.

The most perfect and unquestionably the grandest work of art in Ellora is the world-famous temple of Kailas, which has excited the wonder and admiration of travellers and students, who are never tired of singing its praises. It is a monument, marvellous in its conception, daring in its execution and astonishing in its perfection. Kailas is unique; it is different in many respects from the other rock-cut temples in India, including those at Ellora. In fact the name "rock-cut temple" in the cases of Elephanta, Ajanta, Bagh, Karli and others, is a misnomer; they are mostly *chaityas* and *viharas,* that is, pillared halls for monasteries and cathedrals for religious worship, merely huge chambers cut into the rock, with pillars, cells, niches, and corridors, sculptured and painted.

Kailas, on the other hand, is a perfect temple, Dravidian in style and complete in all its parts. It is like any other Shiva temple in South India, only it is not raised from the ground and built with stone and mortar, but cut and isolated from the surrounding rocks and carved externally and internally in order to create all that a shrine should contain: gateways and courtyards, doors and windows, corridors and vestibules, steps and basement, pillars and porches, niches and sanctuaries, balcony and pavilion, roofs and ceilings, tanks and troughs, images of worship and the chief deity of the temple, all cut, chiselled and carved out of the

living rock and made into a whole temple of worship, according to the strictest injunctions of the Silpa Sastra. A stupendous achievement!

This wonderful structure measures roughly 250 feet in length, 150 feet in breadth and 100 feet in height, not to speak of the cutting of the courtyards that surround the shrine with life-sized elephants, *stambhas* (towers), and verandahs, all of them elegantly carved and exquisitely finished. The whole of the interior, including the ceiling, pilasters, figures and a good portion of the exterior, were originally plastered and painted after the manner of the Ajanta frescoes, but these decorations have now disappeared owing to the ravages of time and the weather. The little that one sees inside the Indra Sabha cave at the extreme northern end conveys some idea of their colour scheme and technique.

Mr. Burgess, late of the Survey Department, has this interesting description of Kailas:

"The lofty basement of the temple is of itself a remarkable conception, with its row of huge elephants, lions and griffins in every possible attitude, tearing one another or feeding. And then the great hall above, with its sixteen or more pillars, all carved with different details of sculpture; its balcony porches at the sides and double pavilions before the front porch; its vestibule to the sanctuary with large sculptures on each side; and its five shrines round the outside of the principal one and on the same platform, all testify to the attempt made to rival and outdo all previous temples of the kind."

Such is a brief description of one of the most wonderful and interesting monuments of architectural art in India. The other long series of caves to the north pale into insignificance after this, though there are such awe-inspiring caves as Nos. 21 and 29, the last one very much resembling the Elephanta cave. But when you come to

the last few caves at the extreme end, you see some excellent pieces of architectural and sculptural art of the Jaina type, rich in decorative style. The Indra Sabha is one of the best examples of this type, and still contains some fragments of painting on the ceilings. The Jaina figures in their teaching and meditative postures are excellently executed and the figure of Indra is a fine specimen of sculpture.

And thus the students of art, religion, and history meet on a common ground and seek inspiration from India's glorious past, which seems to give the message that in the pursuit of truth and beauty there is no Hindu, Buddhist or Jain, and that to the lover the Beloved is in everything, in the open skies, in the green fields, in the flight of birds, in the laughter of children, in the agony of the oppressed, in the dark cell of a prison, as well as in these glorious abodes of mute gods.

## *FRAGMENTS OF A FORGOTTEN EMPIRE*

A curved form in nature is always attractive. The crescent moon in the sky is ever fascinating. It is a beautiful symbol both to the Hindu and the Muslim. Oriental women adore crescent-shaped ornaments. It is suggestive of great fact in nature: the rotundity of things.

All beautiful things in life and nature take a curved form: the vaulting heavens above, the sweeping horizon below, the outlines of high mountains and the surging white-crested waves, the glistening sand-dunes in the desert, the course of rapid-rushing rivers, the tender bosom of young maidens, the well developed limbs of youthful men, buds, flowers, leaves, birds' eyes and beaks, the arched necks of animals, the graceful domes in architecture and even the sound wave in ether.

A "half-moon" face, in profile, is the ideal type of beauty for women, according to the ancient Hindu books. The same books decree that cities should be built along the bends of rivers, as witness the old cities of Kashi, Prayag and Mathura (Muttra), and that religious monuments be designed cresent-shaped, as at Ajanta and Ellora. The Greek idea of an amphitheatre is an instance of this fact in Western art.

The city builders of ancient India recognised this whenever they selected a site for their capitals. The ruined city of Vijayanagar (modern Hampi) was raised round the sweeping bend the river Tungabhadra takes, cutting its way through rock cliffs and granite boulders. The site is exceedingly rugged, wild, and romantic. Fantastically-formed hillocks of broken rocks piled one over another as if raised by human hands, crowd the

place in picturesque confusion.

The Tungabhadra plunges down the narrow gorge in winding curves and eddying pools, taking a broad crescent-sweep where the ruins of the old temples lie. Stone-cut steps lead down to the river for the pilgrims to bathe and offer their ablutions; not grand bathing-ghats like those in Benares with crowds of worshippers and their eternal chanting, but steep, slippery steps precariously hanging over the roaring waters. When the place hummed with life in all its richness and colour and when wealth and splendour shone from every nook and corner in the heyday of its glory, this river-front may have been different, perhaps more regular and better paved, but to-day it is beautiful in its rugged grandeur.

The ruins of Hampi lie about here, there and everywhere, for several miles, and the variety of buildings and monuments that one sees is indeed bewildering, something like the ruins of Polannuruwa in Ceylon. From Kamalapur, where are the Lotus Mahal and the Throne Platform, to the site where the Vittalaswamy temple is situated, (a distance of over eight miles), it is one mass of ruins lost amidst high rocks and narrow clefts. A magnificent city this must have been; the crumbling ruins silently proclaim its departed glory.

The spell of the past holds you in its grip and a marvellous vista of great cities that once flourished on the fair soil of Bharatavarsha, from the days of Ayodhya, over five thousand years ago, to Vijayanagar, in the 16th century, floats before your mind's eye and staggers you into silence. What wonderous visions of mighty temples and stately palaces, of fortified towns and crowded streets, of life of luxury, pomp and pleasure one beholds!

Hampi was the last great city raised by the last of the great Hindu empires that ruled over India. The tidal

wave of Muslim invasion was slowly but steadily pressing forward towards the south, and the one power that resisted its course was the Hindu Kingdom of Vijayanagar, then in its full glory. The Battle of Talikota in 1564 decided the fate of India, and the Muslim power became paramount in the country. The neighbouring Muslim Kingdoms of Bahmani, Bijapur and Golconda joined hands to crush this last powerful empire, and after a great struggle it fell and was scattered and broken into petty principalities.

For over two centuries this dynasty ruled over a great portion of South India. Its greatest king was Krishna Deva Raya, one of the noblest of monarchs, a wise statesman, a patron of arts and letters and a talented artist himself. It was during his reign that some of the most beautiful buildings in Hampi were built, and the unfinished temple of Vittalaswami is a masterpiece of his time. During its halcyon days, Hampi was visited by travellers from Europe, Arabia and other countries, and one and all of them have praised the beauty and magnificence of the city in glowing terms.

Paez, a European traveller, who had visited almost all the great cities in Europe, described it thus: It was "as large as Rome and very beautiful to the sight. A garden city laid out according to the old Indian traditions with spacious parks and orchards. It was the best provided city in the world, stocked with provisions of every kind. The palace of the Raja enclosed a space greater than all the Castle of Lisbon." He described the broad streets with fine houses, the irrigation works that supplied water to the city, the mansions of merchants and craftsmen, in admiring terms. Another visitor, Caeser Frederic, wrote: "I have seen many kings' courts, yet have never seen anything to compare with the royal palace of Bijianuggur, which hath nine gates." Edwardo

Barbessa described the capital as "of great extent, highly populous and the seat of an active commerce in country diamonds, rubies from Pegu, silks of China and Alexandria, and cuinabar, camphor, musk, pepper and sandal from Malabar. The palaces and temples are stately buildings of stone and some of fine marble."

It is indeed a little difficult now to imagine where those broad streets, expansive parks and large lakes lay as the ruins are all lost in the midst of shrubs and stones; and from the layout of the city along the river-side, it is not possible to reconstruct mentally any broad and expansive roads or streets. But, like all ancient cities, they must have been narrow and crowded. The present site of the dancing girls' street, within the narrow ridge of hills, could not by any means have been broad and spacious; even the royal street leading to the main temple of Vishnu could by no stretch of imagination be made to look bigger and wider. It is possible that where the remains of the Hall of Audience now lies there may have been spacious parks and broad streets.

The raised platform, which is identified as the Hall of Audience, is an interesting structure. There are some excellent *bas-relief* carvings of animated scenes and figures executed boldly and powerfully. The series of dancing figure-studies are interesting and instructive. Some of the low-reliefs of human figures are exquisite and are as good as any of their kind. It is a pity that the superstructure is completely lost and no idea can be formed of its architecture. The granite and marble stones used are finely polished and perfectly chiselled. Fragments of beautiful little figures lie all round, and the shrines round about contain striking specimens of the stone-cutter's art.

The two Lotus Mahals, one near Kamalapur and the other near the Elephant Stables, are lovely little storeyed

structures, with cool cells, built in a peculiar Hindu-Muslim style and surrounded by an artificially constructed tank in the midst of which this building blossoms like a lotus bud. It must have been a summer residence for the queens. There are several beautiful wells and tanks in the city, for both drinking and bathing purposes, surrounded by vaulted cells and arched roofs and with interesting stucco decorative works.

The Elephant Stables are a row of high-roofed, large domed structures, with striking door-ways and guard-cells. The domes are of different shapes, and the central one is a mgnificent pile of an arched tower, which must have looked imposing in its original state. Part of it has now crumbled to pieces. The fort walls are massive and deep, indicating a novel method in such constructions. There are quite a large number of other palaces of different sizes and styles in ruins.

The most outstanding monument in the city and the one that interests a student of art considerably is the famous Vittalaswamy temple, begun during the reign of Raja Krishna Deva Raya but left unfinished for reasons not now clearly known. It is not imposing like the Madura temple with lofty *gopurams* or like Rameshwaram with long corridors, nor is it so rich and ornate as the temples in the Mysore State, but its beauty centres round the pillared porch and the elevated *mantapam,* which are, undoubtedly, of the best specimens of their kind in South Indian architecture. In fact, this temple is about the best example of architecture of the Vijayanagar period. Later temples all over South India copied this type of *mantapam* and pillared porch.

The basement contains some fine frieze carvings of spirited animal figures, procession of cars and battle scenes. The pillars are exceedingly elegant, though massive in some parts, and are richly sculptured with

prancing horses and poised riders. The capitals, entablature and cornices are noble, dignified and fit in beautifully with the whole scheme of the structure, and the curved roof-endings are chastely designed with low-relief floral patterns. The ceilings were originally painted in rich harmonious colours, patches of which can still be seen. The unfinished portion of the shrine is like any other Dravidian temple, with walls, niches and cells.

A delightfully carved little stone car, with figures and friezes, stands in sweet solitude. The other shrines, *sabhas* and sanctuaries, though now in a dilapidated state, are interesting in their own way; a high wall encloses these buildings, with large open spaces all round. It is a great pity that this wonderful temple was not completed by the Hindu kings of the later centuries and preserved from further ruin. Even as it now stands, it is a gem of architectural art.

Hampi has other attractions according to the bent and nature of the pilgrim. The giant monolithic carving of Narasimha (man-lion figure) is worth careful study for its strength and power of expression. Large slabs of stones, chiselled and carved, are well balanced on pillars like *toranas*. The pious Hindu will be shown the cave in which Seeta was kept captive by Ravana after her abduction, the rocky eminence (Hemakuta) from where Hanuman surveyed the direction of their flight, and such other myths. The silent lover of nature will find ideal spots for meditation and contemplation, and the traveller refreshingly restful places for his tired limbs.

## *THE MONOLITHIC MARVELS OF MAHABALIPURAM*

The site of Mahabalipuram, popularly known as the Seven Pagodas, is puzzling to the extreme. One can imagine anything about its origin. It could have been a thriving sea-port town of ancient times or a famous *thirtha* for pilgrimage of bygone days; it could have been an experimental school of sculpture or the workshop of temple stone-cutters; it could easily have been the seat of a religious mutt or the resort of exiled craftsmen, who not knowing what to do, chiselled and carved the boulders and stones lying about the place into things of beauty, in playful moods and to beguile their time. Such are the bewildering specimens of the sculptural and architectural arts to be seen to-day at this place.

Sober historians tell us that it was once a capital city under the Pallava kings, and one of them, Narasimhavarman, ordered the carvings of these rock-cut temples, and called the city after his name, Mamalla, a title which he assumed after becoming king, and hence the place came to be known as Ma-Malla-Puram, (the City of Malla the Great). Tradition, however, would have it associated with the mythical Emperor Bali, whom Vishnu sent down into the bowels of the earth with his foot, and hence the name Mahabalipuram (the City of Great Bali).

It came to be known as the "Seven Pagodas," either because of the pagoda-shaped *raths* that still exist here or because of the seven temples, like the one on the shore now, that once stood on the site and have now disappeared under the sea. Fiction or no fiction, the fact remains that the monuments of Mahabalipuram form one of the

interesting landmarks in Indian art, and especially in the development of South Indian architecture and are therefore of tremendous importance to students of art.

And yet there is visible amidst all these a great achievement in art, striking and significant. The sculptors' implements have changed rough rocks into "sermons in stones"; the dead faces of granite boulders are alive with figures—gods, men, birds and animals—touched to life by the magic stroke of their mallet and chisel. Stones breathe strange life; forgotten legends and stories relive before one's eyes in moving lines and animated forms. So vivid, so realistic and so compelling is this virile art of Mamallapuram.

Let us survey and study, very briefly, some of these superb specimens of sculptural art, which, though exposed to centuries of heat, rain and cold, still retain their excellence and reveal their aesthetic qualities. There is an amazing variety of sculptures to be seen here: group compositions in action scenes; life-sized figures of elephants, monkeys, deer, cheetahs and birds in the round and reliefs; gods, human beings, heavenly nymphs and dwarfs in full and in profile; friezes and floral designs flow freely from these stones.

Perhaps the most spirited and the finest piece of *bas-relief* to be seen anywhere, is the well-known carving of "Arjuna's Penance". It is a marvellous work though a little amusing. The front face of two big rocky boulders, with a cleft in the middle, is covered with scenes of intense life and action, comprising *rishis* in meditation, elephants with their young ones on the march, monkeys at play, cheetahs, tigers and lions crouching and crawling about; ascetics, warriors and dawrfs in groups, a cat doing penance while rats are running about, human beings with legs of birds and actual birds in flight, like geese, cocks and flying human figures—all chiselled with

extraordinary vigour and skill and in a natural and spirited style. There is life and animation in every one of those figures, bustle and movement of actual life. Fergusson considered it "the most remarkable things of its class in the world". He was, however, mistaken in calling it "Arjuna's Penance".

There is nothing in the whole scene, excepting the figure of an emaciated old man with his hands raised in prayer (whom he identified as Arjuna for no apparent reason) to conclusively prove that it refers to the penance of the hero of the Mahabharata. It can more likely be, as my friend, the late Mon. Jouveau-Dubreuil conjectured, Bhagiratha's Penance, and if that be conceded, the meaning of the cleft in the centre with the figures of *Nagakanyas* becomes obvious. It was possible that, in the olden days, a stream flowed on the upper portion of the hillock and was made to drop in a beautiful cascade over the cleft; and the figure of Bhagiratha doing penance near it, the animated groupings of rishis, animals, devas and others, indicating the scene and life in the Himalayas with the descent of Ganga as the result of the penance, could well be a more correct interpretation.

There is a repetition of the same theme, on a similar scale, just below the cave of the *Varaha Avatar*. Yet another classical piece of relief sculpture is the pastoral group in the Krishna Cave. The cattle taking shelter from the furies of rain and storm, the startled expression of a young bull, with head slightly turned and forefoot extended, are all treated with life-like realism.

The most interesting and remarkable of these monoliths however are the Pandava Raths, so called from the fact of their being five in number. They stand near the sea shore and are, perhaps, the oldest of the series. The sculptures in the niches of one of these *raths* are some of the grandest and most perfect specimens of the sculptor's

art. Some of them are even superior to those at *Ellora* and Elephanta, and judging from their workmanship, they can be estimated to have been executed about the sixth century A.D.

The standing figures of a king and queen in two panels, on the exterior walls of the one of these *raths*, are as good as the best portrait statues to be seen anywhere in India. The outlines of the reliefs are easy and graceful and true to life and nature; the poses well balanced and reposeful, the modelling tender and supple, and the expression calm and serene. There is a royal dignity about every one of the figures. There are other carvings at Mamallapuram that are of great merit but these panel-studies are supreme works of art.

These five *raths* are designed and carved after the *vimana* style of the Dravidian architecture and are monolithic in structure. One of them has an aspidal termination; another is an oblong building with a curvilinear roof; the last *rath* in this group is about the best and more interesting. The upper storey is completely carved and contains some fine statues of the gods and goddesses; the lower portion is, however, left unfinished.

Besides these temple-like structures, several rock-hewn caves are to be seen here; some of them with big panels of relief carvings, like the Mahisasuramardhini and Varaha Avatar of Vishnu, rendered in a most rigorous manner. The "Shore Temple," near the sea, is a later structure and is built of cut stones. The waves of the sea wash its doorsteps, and the *tejastambha* (light-pillar) still stands in the water buffleted by the waves. There is a large figure of Vishnu in a sleeping posture, though the main temple itself is dedicated to Shiva. A gem of sculpture lying about here is that of a deer stretching itself in a relaxed and natural position, scratching its nose with its hind foot, as delightful a work of art as the

pair of monkeys catching fleas on each other near the big *bas-relief*.

The architecture and sculpture of the Seven Pagodas, thus form an interesting chapter in the history of Indian art and throw a good deal of light on the origin and growth of certain styles and motifs in the evolution of South Indian temples of later centuries.

## *WITH THE MASTER-BUILDERS OF ANCIENT MYSORE*

THE political vicissitudes of Mysore make a most fascinating chapter in Indian history. She has witnessed the rise and fall of some of the most powerful empires of the past within her own boundaries, and successive dynasties, from the Mauryan to the Mohammedan, ruled over her destinies for the past two thousand years. Mauryas, Kadambas, Pallavas, Gangas, Chalukyas, Cholas, Hoysalas, Yadavas and Muslims have fought on her soil for supremacy and power and left their impress in the monuments, inscriptions, coins, which lie buried profusely all over the country.

If one believes the inscriptions on one of the Jain temples on the Chandragiri at Sravanabelagola, Mysore played an important part in the life of Chandragupta, the founder of the Mauryan dynasty, who, it is there stated, visited the place in the company of the great Jain misisonary, Bhadrabahu, and passed his last days in retirement and died on the hill, which is still known after his name. The scenes from the lives of these two personages are very elegantly carved in relief on one of the *facades* of Chandragupta Basti here.

Asoka's Edicts on rocks and pillars in the Mysore State indicate her early connection with one of the most powerful Indian Empires of the past. The reigns of the Kadambas, Gangas and others are mostly known from inscriptions and coins; but the great dynasties of the Pallavas, Chalukyas and Hoysalas, who ruled over this part of India for several centuries and built cities and temples, are known by the wonderful monuments they

have left behind them. Some of them are world-famous and are considered gems of architectural art.

The most notable of them are, of course, the groups of temples that lie within a radius of a hundred miles from the modern city of Mysore. They are known to students of art as the Hoysala temples. The recent excavations at Chandravalli, an ancient capital near modern Chitaldrug, reveal an older type of architecture more akin to the Gupta art. The Dravidian-style temple near Nandi shows another phase of Chola art, with fine examples of stone statues. But the special features of Mysore monuments are these Hoysalas-styles which abound in such richness and variety all over the Karnataka. Three stand out prominently and have attracted universal attention; they are the Hoysaleswara temple at Halebid, dedicated to Shiva; and the Kesava temples at Belur and Somnathpur, dedicated to Vishnu.

Halebid has a fine situation for a temple, a little like the temple of Martand in Kashmir. The latter is, of course, more magnificently surrounded by snowy peaks in the background and on emerald valley with rich verdant soil and a winding silvery river in the front. There is nothing so picturesque or beautiful surrounding the temple at Halebid except the straggling village, which was once the site of the great capital city of Dwarasamudra.

Built on the slope of a gently rising ground, overlooking an expansive artificial lake, which is distantly surrounded by low purple hills, this temple has the romantic quietness of pastoral life. Nothing disturbs the peace of the place; the distant noise of the creaking bullock carts, the plaintive tune of the driver singing his lonely songs, the soft melody of the shepherd boys playing the flute, the women chattering near the lake taking water, the bells in the Jain temple further afar, the yelling

of village watch-dogs, all these are only faintly heard. The wealth of beauty lavished so joyously by the artificers of this temple keeps you in mute adoration. In silence and in deep reverence you walk round the shrine, though no worship is being performed inside the sanctuary, and the intense richness of beauty all around makes you feel, as a poet friend of mine wrote in the visitors' book, "The temple finished us before we finished seeing it."

The architectural features of these temples are a little different in their construction, arrangement and plan, from the Dravidian temples, though the five main elements of temple architecture, the *gopuram,* the *prakaram,* the *mantapam, the vimanam* and the *garbha-graha* are retained. The whole temple stands on a raised platform, four to five feet high, on a star-shaped terrace. There is a pillard hall in front with a big Nandi carved in stone; the shrine rises in a polygonal cone, richly embossed with sculpture. The shrine repeats itself on the other side, and thus the two shrines on a common basement give the impression of a single structure. What catches the eye and rivets the attention of the visitor is the exuberance of carvings on the exterior from the plinth to the top. Every inch of wall-space in the edifice is carved with scrolls, friezes, figures and windows of pierced slabs.

The basement is covered with six parallel rows of carved friezes of exquisite workmanship the whole way round the building. This is a common feature in all Hoysala temples, especially of these three at Halebid, Belur and Somnathpur. The lowest frieze is a row of elephants, in all sorts of postures and movements, with *mahuts* and trappings, most elegantly and realistically rendered. There are said to be over two thousand of them carved in that manner. Then above is a procession of horses and horsemen, richly caparisoned and in ani-

mated motion. It has to be admitted that no sculptors in the world can approach the Indian and Sinhalese stone carvers in the depiction of these two animals, especially the elephant. The third frieze is a flowing scroll design of exquisite charm; the fourth represents scenes from the stories of the Ramayana and Mahabharata, portrayed vividly and decoratively; the fifth and sixth contain two of the common motifs in Hindu architecture, those of *makara* and *hamsa.* These friezes are executed in a masterly way and to an amazing perfection. The nearest approach to them are the famous moonstone steps and the bigger friezes in stone to be seen at Anuradhapura and Polanuruwa in Ceylon.

The porches and the door entrances are also filled with decorative designs and the surfaces of the polygonal shrines are studded with statues of the gods and goddesses, some of them repeated several times, but all richly and elaborately carved. Of their general constructive features, Fergusson spoke in the highest terms, and he was inclined to think that where the Gothic architects failed, these Hindu artists succeeded in a remarkable manner. He wrote: "The mode in which the eastern face is broken up by the larger masses, so as to give height and play of light and shade, is a better way of accomplishing what the Gothic architects attempted by their transepts and projections. This, however, is surpassed by the western front, where the variety of outline and the arrangements and subordination of the various facets in which it is disposed, must be considered as a masterpiece of design in its class. If the frieze of gods were spread along a plain surface it would lose more than half its effect, while the vertical angles, without interfering with the continuity of the frieze, give height and strength to the whole composition. The disposition of the horizontal lines of the lower friezes is equally effect-

ive. Here again the artistic combination of horizontal with vertical lines, and the play of outline and of light and shade, far surpass anything in Gothic art. The effects are what mediaeval architects were often aiming at, but which they never attained so perfectly as was done at Halebid."

Fergusson even compared it with the Parthenon though the two buildings are poles apart in their design, nature and contents. One typified the severe, cold, intellectual genius of Greece, the other the warm emotional exuberance of oriental nature.

The temple at Belur is lost within the walled enclosures built round it by the later kings who worshipped at the shrine. It has no commanding view or happy surroundings. Much of its symmetrical beauty is lost in the subsequent additions of shrines built round it with no eye for order or beauty. The original temple itself stands on a polygonal basis, in the usual Hoysala style, and is richly carved. The door-entrance is highly decorative. This temple has some beautifully chiselled pierced windows of different designs and patterns. The pillars inside the shrine are real wonders of art and craftsmanship, like the Jain pillars, and each pillar distinct from the other. The central canopy has a huge pendant hanging with elaborate carvings and the figure of Hiranyakasipu in the middle.

There are several lovely brackets of female figures surrounding the dome, all carved beautifully. The brackets of female figures (*Madanika)* outside, in different poses, are exquisitly fine. The chief deity inside the sanctuary is a splendid specimen of black stone sculpture, full of noble expression and feeling; but, alas! clothed and adorned by the priests, it looks hideous. This temple is impresive, not because of its size or location, but because of the marvellous elaboration and beauty of

detail of its sculptures and carvings.

The Kesava Temple at Somnathpur is about the best preserved of these three. It is a perfect gem of architecture. It is single and complete, and affords a good example of the Hoysala art. History tells us that it was built by Soma, a minister of the Hoysala king Narasimha the Third. The main structure contains three cells with their *sikharas,* and all the exterior, from basement to pinnacle, is minutely and delightfully carved with friezes and figures. The basement frieze here differs slightly from those of Halebid and Belur, in that the fourth and fifth contain small figures of gods and men and women engaged in worldly pleasures respectively. The small canopies inside contain ceilings of different patterns, intricate and interesting. The black stone statue of Krishna playing the flute, in one of the cells inside, in a superb specimen of the sculptor's art.

It is interesting to note that in these temples of Hoysalas, the names of sculptors and architects are carved clearly, a unique feature in old Indian art. The names of Chavna, Chikka Hampa, Mallitamma, Malliyanna, Yallana's son Masada, Katoja's son Nagoja and others often appear incised at the base of some of the big sculptural works. Tradition, however, ascribes these temples to the genius of Jakanachari and Dakanachari, father and son, who rivalled one another in their art. There are other shrines of this type at Arsikere, Haranhalli, Nugahalli, Turuvakere and other places, but they are more repetitions of these and often poorer in details.

Historic Mysore is picturesque also. There are hundreds of miles of good roads leading to the beauty-spots of Mysore. Thick forests, expansive lakes, elevated plateaus, rich fertile plains, high mountains, wild rivers, gorgeous waterfalls, deep gorges, steep ghats, cover the whole country. The climate varies from temperate

to tropical heat, mild and bearable throughout the year. Modern cities like Bangalore and Mysore have attractions for visitors. Gold mines, iron mines, huge dams, irrigation canals and grand electric power stations add to the wealth of the State; and dominating over and above all these is the tutelary deity of the rulers of Mysore, Sri Chamundeswari.

## *BEFORE THE SRAVANABELAGOLA GOMETESWARA*

IF one could look into the Memory of Nature and read from its imperishable records the true history of ancient India, the great empires that once flourished within her bosom, the mighty dynasties that reigned over her people in the bygone days, the various vicissitudes of her dimly remembered civilisations and her dead and decaying arts and crafts, one would necessarily have to revise one's present knowledge of her past and consequent erroneous estimation of her greatness. How many of us, for instance, know that South India, which now is so conservative and unprogressive, colonised Egypt several thousand years ago and sent missionaries of her culture, arts and religions to far-off Sumatra, Java, Siam and Combodia in the early centuries of the Christian era, and that the Deccan, which now is the stronghold of Hinduism and orthodoxy, was, in those early centuries, the stronghold of Jainism and Buddhism, that powerful Jain and Buddhist kings ruled over rich and prosperous kingdoms, and that the land was covered with magnificent Jain and Buddhist monuments.

The only trace of the past glory of the Jain and Buddhistic period in the south is now to be seen in the two great classics of the Tamils, the Silapathikaram and Manimekhalai. The colossal images of Buddha, made of beaten gold and silver, described as having existed in large numbers, the monastries and other seats of learning that were spread throughout the land, and the walled cities that once were the capitals of forgotten empires, have all disappeared, leaving no traces behind them.

Janism, in the days of its power and glory, also raised wonderful monuments, and the achievements of its followers were no less than those of either the Hindus or the Buddhists.

There was a continuous flow of Jain migration into Southern India from the north and some of the powerful kingdoms that reigned here were of that faith. Remnants of these people are still to be seen scattered throughout the Deccan, but very little of their artistic achievement is now to be seen. Most of the Jain *Bastis* (temples), which are world-famous for their elegantly designed and richly carved pillars, are now in ruins. These *Bastis* of the south, even in their ruined state far surpass in beauty and skill of workmanship those too elaborately carved and over-ornate temples of Abu, Satrunjya, Girnar, Sadri and Rajmahal in northern India.

The most famous are, of course, the three famous Jain images of Gometeswara, *Bettus* as they are called. These statues are gigantic in size and are of considerable artistic merit. They have drawn the attention of archaeologists and scholars from the very beginning and have been greatly admired for their unique size, proportion and beauty. Such gigantic images are to be found nowhere else within the confines of India, though references to them are to be found in the old literature of the country.

The Chinese travellers, Houen Tsang and Fa Hian, both describe some of the colossal statues of the Buddha they saw in their travels. Fa Hian says: "On passing the mountain chain of Esung Ling snowy range, we arrive in North India. On the confines of this region is a little kingdom called Toli, in which live a congregation of priests belonging to the Little Vehicle. Here is an image of the Lord Buddha, 95 feet high, and the length of the foot of the image is 9 feet and 4 inches. On festival

days, it always emits an effulgent light. The princes of all the neighbouring countries vie with each other in making religious offerings to it. It still exists in this country".

Houen Tsang's account of another statue is as follows: "To the north-east of the royal city there is a mountain, on the declivity of which is placed a stone figure of Buddha, erect, in height 140 or 150 feet. Its golden hue sparkles on every side and its precious ornaments dazzle the eyes by their brightness. To the east of the convent there is a standing figure of Sakhya Buddha, made of metallic stone, in height 100 feet. To the east of the city twelve or thirteen *li*, there is a convent, in which there is a figure of Buddha lying in sleeping position, as when he attained *Nirvana*. The figure is in length about 100 feet or so." So these giant statues were not uncommon in North India, and the Jains may have brought that art tradition with them. The difference between these gigantic images of the Buddhists and the Jains is that the former are always draped while the later are nude.

The colossus of Gometeswara at Sravanabelagola, in the Mysore State, is the oldest of the three and the tallest of them. It is carved out of a monolithic stone on the top of a rocky bluff, which rises abruptly to a height of about 1,000 feet from the surrounding plains and has a commanding view. The statue can be sighted from anywhere within a circumference of nearly twenty miles, and its striking, unusual appearance attracts the attention of all who travel by the trunk roads leading from Bangalore or Mysore. The town itself was once a great centre of learning. It is laid out between two cliffs which rise perpendicularly, and on whose tops are to be seen this image of Gometeswara on the one side and a number of *bastis* or temples on the other. There is a magnificent

tank of considerable dimensions at the foot of the hills. The statue stands erect, facing the north, and is nude; its height is 61 feet from crown to foot. As a piece of sculpture, it stands unrivalled and according to some even surpasses some of the famous gigantic statues in Egypt.

There was an impression in the minds of early European students of Indian Art that Indian artists were incapable of producing any great work of realistic art. These three images of the Jains give the direct lie to that impression. The figures, though of enormous size, are lifelike and full of repose; their proportion is amazingly accurate, and the modelling infinitely tender and true. To have carved human figures of that size out of a mass of rocky cliff is achievement enough, but to have perfected statues of such proportions, features full of expression, beautifullly modelled limbs and legs, and given them charm, is something amazing. The statues can bear the strictest examination by the canons of anatomy, proportion, perspective, without in any way losing their idealistic merits.

The nests of snakes near the feet, the ant-hills, and the creeping twigs and leaves of the tree *ficus religiosa* are, apart from their religious significance, mere decorative elements to enhance the beauty of the figures seen in profile. These figures impress one tremendously with their clear-cut lines and striking poses. The amount of labour lavished on these satues by those unknown sculptors is equalled only by their extraordinary skill and mastery over their craft. Their origin and purpose are lost in traditions that have become woven round them during the many centuries that have passed by, like so many nights, and there they stand, defying time and weather, without change, like the immortal gods! Isn't that a test of immortal art?

South Canara, in the Deccan, is rich in Jain monuments. The *bastis* at Moodbidri and Karkal, and their cunningly wrought pillars of exquisite design and lovely patterns, are well known to students of Indian architecture through the writings of Fergusson. The other two colossi of Gometeswara are also to be seen in the vicinity of these two places. The one at Karkal is the second highest, measuring about 41 feet in height, and is also of imposing character. It is also on the summit of a small cliff and commands a fine panoramic view facing the peak Kudurai-mukku, a high eminence on the Western Ghats that run parallel to the sea coast from north to south. The statue is called "the black image", because it was believed to have been made of black stone, which, however, is not the truth. The heavy rainfall due to the south-west monsoon has changed the colour of the stone from grey granite almost to black. A most elaborately carved and exquisitely finished pillar is to be found near this place, standing in solitary grandeur.

Yenur, or Venur, as it is called, is about 12 miles from Moodbidri, the chief Jaina town of to-day in South Canara, and has the third and last of these *bettus*. It is the smallest, being about 37 feet in height. (There is another near Yelwal, on the Mysore-Coorg road, much smaller than this image and not quite so well known). It differs a little from the other statues, both with regard to its situation and in the details of its carving and expression. It is situated in the midst of a park-like enclosure, and has low hills lying on its three sides and a small winding river nearby. It has picturesque surroundings. The expression on the face is not the serene deep contemplative look of the other two Gometeswaras but a benign smile of irresistible charm with a lovely dimple on the chin. The hands are more relaxed and the limbs more elegantly modelled. The snakes near the

feet have three heads and are fewer in number; otherwise, it bears the same stamp and signature of the art of the other two statues. What manner of men were they who made these stones glow with life and for whose glory wrought they these wondrous works of art?



*Temple Panel*
*South India*
*Abhay Khatau*



*Madanika (Chalukyan)* *Abhaya Khatau*



*Madanika (Belur)* *Abhay Khatau*



*Mahabalipuram*



*Detail—Mahabalipuram*

*R. Moorty*



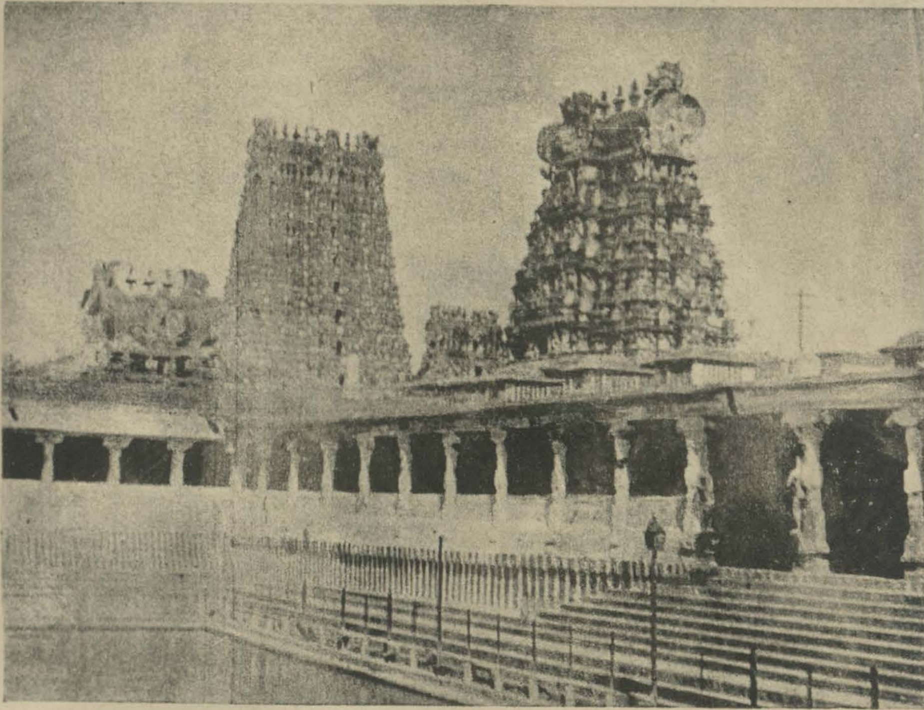
*Gommateshwara*
*Marg-Mistri*



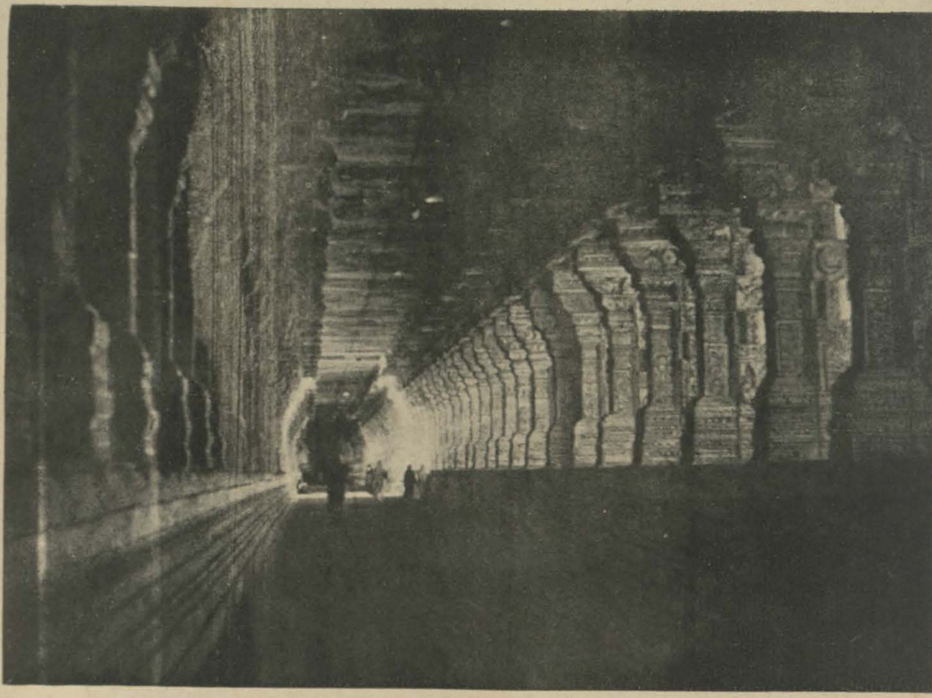
*Mahabalipuram*



*Tirumala Naik Palace* *V. P. Bhatt*



*Gopurams of Madura*



*Corridor of the Rameshwara Temple*



*The ceiling of Vastupala Temple Mt. Abu.* *Subhodhchandra Shah*

## *UNDER THE SHADOWS OF THE GOPURAMS OF MADURA*

SOUTH INDIA is the land of temples and priests. The orthodoxy of the priestly caste is something incredible and its hold on the minds of the people, both the classes and the masses, is something terrible. A silent social revolt, to throw off this powerful domination, has been slowly going on but, unfortunately, it is often used by crafty, scheming politicians and opportunists for their personal selfish ends, for job-hunting, for titles, communal rancour and hatred.

South India is famous for its bronzes; the world-wide known image of Nataraja, the Cosmic Dancer, being "a veritable *tour de force* of mental visualization and imaginative interpretation in the art-history of the world." South India has produced some of the greatest philosophers, metaphysicians, saints, poets and religious reformers of the world; and in modern times, some of the cleverest judges, jurists and lawyers. The history of South India, both geologically and culturally, is more ancient than the history of the Aryan India of the north; the people, the literature and the arts in the south represent one of the oldest of the world's civilizations. Though life, in its external aspect, is a little crude and primitive, yet in the realms of the mind and creative expression, it easily takes a front-rank place in the world.

Writers of Indian history have a general weakness and a natural tendency to praise all that is Aryan in the land and to deprecate the non-Aryan elements in the Indian culture of to-day. It is generally taken for granted that the Aryanisation of India is synonymous with the

civilizing of the country that had been peopled by semi-barbarous tribes, even as it is now taken for granted by a certain class of people that the advent of British rule in India brought about her present prosperity and progress (?). This inference is quite misleading if not utterly absurd.

To anyone who has travelled widely in India and has contacted intimately the life of the people in the different provinces, it will be obvious that along with Aryanisation of the Dravidians (the people who were living in India at the time of Aryan migration) there has also been a Dravidianising of the Aryans. In fact, it is difficult to point out in modern India how much is Aryan and how much is Dravidian. It is true that in the South there is a larger percentage of the Dravidian culture than in the North.

If I should hazard a mathematical proportion, based on close personal observation, I should put it as follows: South India about 60% Dravidian and 40% Aryan; Bengal (where there is an admixture of the Mongolian blood and culture and hence richer) about 40% Aryan, 40% Dravidian and 20% Mongolian; Maharashtra about 50% of each; Gujerat and Rajputana, 75% Aryan and 25% Dravidian. This will be noticeable in the physical features, colours, types, customs and the arts of the people.

But it seems to me, notwithstanding the opinion of very learned men, that in sheer brain power and in intellectual matters, the Dravidian is superior to the Aryan; and much of the so called Aryan philosophy is a Dravidian contribution to Indian thought. It will not be possible to go at any length into this controversial subject, but if a casual survey of the modern Indians and their intellectual and artistic capacities are any proof, it will be evident that the people of South India, Bengal

and Maharashtra (where the Dravidian element is equal, if not greater than the Aryan) are more brainy and subtle-minded than their pure Aryan brethren in the Punjab and Kashmir. The Aryan is superior to the Dravidian in many other respects; but, till now, the burden of the song had been that it was the Aryan who civilised the Dravidian, and the time has come, I think, to correct this misrepresentation of Indian history.

Now Madura is a typical Dravidian city, one of the oldest cities in the world. The present city is the third of the same name; the two previous ones are believed, in the Tamil legends, to have been capitals of yet more ancient kingdoms but are now sunk under the Indian Ocean. The Silapathikaram, a Jaina work and one of the oldest classics in the world (about 1800 years old) refers to Madura as the capital city of the Pandyan kings. Roman historians mention this city and its rulers in their chronicles.

Three powerful empires ruled over South India from dim antiquity, and they are known in history as the Cholas, the Cheras and the Pandyas. The earliest reference to them, so far as historians are able to trace, is on the pillars of Asoka, where mention is made of these neighbouring kingdoms. They have been contemporaries of other mighty empires in Indian history, those of the Mauryas, the Guptas, the Andhras, the Pallavas, the Gangas, the Hoysalas, and they fought battles with them (more often in defence) and succeeded in maintaining their kingdoms intact for several centuries. The Cholas once ruled over a great portion of India, as far as the Gangetic valley, and invaded Lanka several times. These kings were great builders also; and a study of South Indian history is a study of their achievements in war, the arts and literature, as recorded by them in inscriptions on temple walls.

The history of South Indian temple architecture may be summarised briefly as follows: The oldest architectural monuments to be found in South India are the well-known remains of the *stupas* with their marvellous relief carvings at Amaravati and Goli (about 2nd century A.D.), built by the Andhra kings. The next remarkable groups of architecture are the rock-cut caves and temples of the Pallava kings (from 7th to 10th century A.D.), at Mahabalipuram, Kanchi, Trichy and Undavalli. For over ten centuries the Cholas built mightily, grandly and beautifully, and the temples at Tanjore, Gangaigondapuram and other places are their handiwork. The Pandyas were great builders too, and their ancient city is even now the proud possessor of a magnificent temple, though much of what one sees to-day is the contribution of later Hindu kings who ruled over South India, the Nayaks of Madura.

Madura was a seat of a great University of olden days, like Nalanda or Takshasila. Forty-nine Pandya kings were its patrons; the greatest poets and philosophers of the Tamil land were its members. Any great work of literature, to become popular and worthy to be considered, had to bear the seal of this University. There is a faint remembrance of that great seat of learning even to-day in the Madura Tamil Sangham, presided over by the Setupatis of Ramnad.

The Buddhist monasteries and *viharas* that once adorned the city in such large numbers have completely disappeared, leaving no trace behind them; the royal streets with their bazaars of silver and gold wares, merchants of emeralds and rubies, sellers of fragrant flowers and sweet fruits, stalls of bright brass and copper vessels, dealers in home-spun cloths in rich hues, all these are mere memories of the past. The skilled craftsmen, artificers, masons, jewellers and stone-cutters are no more to be seen here. In obscure corners, old *sthapatis* work,

unknown and unhonoured. Petty shops with tinsel goods have filled their places. No royal mansions, no pleasure-parks greet your eyes; miserable, mean-looking dwelling houses, half-clad and half famished men and women, fat and prosperous-looking Nattukottai Chetties, dust, filth and unholy priests, these constitute modern Madura.

But towering high above these sordid surroundings, and cut off from the noisy world round about by long high massive walls, the temple of Madura rises majestically, calm, ancient, serene, silent as the very gods that it enshrines. The *gopurams* in the north, east, west and south, soaring heavenwards, are quite awe-inspiring and are suggestive of the spiritual aspirations of the races that built them. These *gopurams* are peculiar to South Indian temple architecture and form one of its distinctive features. They are gigantic towered-gateways, pyramidal in shape, several storeys high (generally from 5 to 13), elaborately carved with figures of the gods, saints, men and mythological legends, with a line of *kalasams* in gold or gilt as a crowning finial. The eastern *gopuram* is a superb specimen of its kind, noble, elegant and marvellously proportioned, perhaps the most magnificent tower-building in the world.

The temple itself has seen many vicissitudes during its age-long existence, and successive Chola, Pandya, and Vijianagar kings and petty chieftains, have reconstructed the old temple during their reigns and added portions here and there to mark their royal offerings, so that it has now almost become a conglomeration of *mandapams*, corridors, courtyards, pillared halls, and sanctuaries. The oldest part of the temple is the inner shrine of Sundareswar, and the latest is the new *mandapam* erected in front of the eastern gateway by one of the Nayak kings.

*This mandapam* has some very interesting pieces of sculptural work, especially portrait-figures of the Nayak

kings and their consorts. It is a painful sight to see this beautiful pillared hall, with its sculptured treasures, turned into a temple-bazaar with noisy crowds buying, bartering, selling, shouting and quarrelling, not to speak of the dirt, filth, spit and other nuisances. Will it ever be restored to its original grandeur? The thousand-pillared hall, inside the temple, contains some exquisite works of art, which would by themselves make a unique art gallery. Most of these sculptures are masterpieces of their kind; seldom does one see such strength and power, pose and repose in sculptured forms. The anatomical delineation is absolutely perfect and the rhythmic quality of these statues is amazing.

There is a monolithic pillar carving inside the inner *mandapam,* near the flag-staff, showing the marriage of Shiva with Parvati. In the centre stands the young, shy, bashful bride, her face lit up with a happy smile at the prospect of marrying Shiva; on the right side stands Vishnu giving Parvati's hands into those of Shiva, with a sad smile on his lips at parting from his beloved sister; and in the left is Shiva, attired in his best, standing solemn, serene and inwardly happy, softly holding his bride's hands. The whole treatment is realistic and the expressions tender and true. From the point of view of Hindu masterpieces of sculpture, this may not hold as high a place as the sculpture of the same theme at Elephanta, or even be considered as good as the works at Ellora or Mahabalipuram, or as powerful as the statue of "Shiva as Beggar" in the Madura temple itself; but, nevertheless, it is a wonderful piece of stone-carving, one of the best left by the Nayak kings. There are other interesting pieces of equal merit inside this *mandapam,* but it will not be possible to describe them in detail in the course of a short study.

The tank inside the enclosure of the Meenakshi

shrine is another beautiful work of architectural art; the view of the two *gopurams* through the opening of the small portico hanging over the tank is one of the grandest and noblest that human eyes can see. The great Teppa Tank, some four miles away, is another magnificent structure built by the Nayak kings. It is one of the biggest temple-tanks in India, of fine proportions and with a small pleasure grove and shrine in the middle to afford cool shelter and rest to pilgrims in summer time.

The Thirumalai Naicken Palace, a splendid specimen of secular building, is one of the monumental landmarks of the last of the Hindu kings who ruled over this part of the country after the fall of the Vijayanagar Empire. It is an imposing structure of large dimensions with high massive pillars and vaulted roofs and domes. The style is more Moorish than Hindu, and the stucco work is interesting from the point of view of decorative art. The tragedy about the building today is that, instead of being a monument to be preserved or a museum for the public, it is used for Law Courts and Government offices, much of the interior being made ugly and vulgar, to suit bureaucratic purposes. Where once laughter, love, beauty and romance reigned, we now only hear the noisy arguments of *vakils* and the petty quarrels of clients. It is time that the offices were removed from these palatial premises and that these were restored to their original magnificence, as it is time that the priests were driven out of the temple and it is preserved as a great monument of art.

## *ON THE ROAD TO KANYAKUMARI*

THE roads in India are long and dusty, but the road from Kanchi to Kanyakumari is longer and dustier. Over five hundred miles lie between these two historic places, and four ancient kingdoms in the past ruled over the land that lies between them. Towering temples stand like milestones all along the highway; stories and legends cast their spell alike on the pilgrim and the tourist, as he covers the ancient ground in a modern transport. A thousand memories crowd his mind and a thousand sentiments arise in his heart, as he speeds through this long and dusty way to India's land's end.

Kanchi, one of the seven sacred cities of Bharatavarsha, was for four centuries the capital of the mighty Pallava Empire, whose kings were wise rulers, great builders, and patrons of art and learning. Its greatest king was Mahendravarman of the Simhavishnu dynasty, a contemporary of the Chalukyan king, Pulakesin, and converted from Jainism to Hinduism by his friend the Saint Appar, he assumed such significant titles as *Mattavilasa* (author of the book of the same name), *Chetthakari* (builder of Buddhist shrines), *Vichitrachitta* (artist), *Narendra* (ruler of the earth), *Satrumalla* (destroyer of the enemies), *Kalapriya* (lover of the arts) and so forth.

His son, Narasimhavarman, who assumed the title of Mahamalla, was no less great a ruler. He built the seaport town of Mahabalipuram, invaded Vatapi and defeated the Chalukyan Pulakesin and helped the Ceylon Prince Manavamma to regain his throne. It was during his reign that the famous Chinese scholar Hiuen-Tsang

visited Kanchi and wrote his impressions of its greatness and glory. "The people of Kanchi," he wrote, "were superior in bravery and piety and in their love of learning to any other people I had met in my travels."

Kanchi still contains some magnificent Pallava monuments, the two most notable of them being the famous Kailasanathar and Vaikuntaperumal temples. Both these are excellent examples of Pallava architecture, with their characteristic lion-based pillars, bold sculptural reliefs and chastely cut and perfectly fitted stone *vimanas.* Remnants of old paintings are still to be seen in faded fragments on the walls of the Kailasanathar temple. These two temples inspired the creators of the rock-cut Kailas at Ellora and the architects of Vatapi as models for their wonderful masterpieces. Mahabalipuram seems to have been their model workshop.

Modern Conjeevaram is littered with temples, big and small, Hindu and Jain, extending from the 4th to the 17th centuries, from the Pallava to the Vijayanagar periods, thus affording a rich field for sight-seeing, study and contemplation. Conjeevaram was a seat of learning from the earliest times; the great Sankaracharya, Appar, Siruthondar and hosts of other philosophers and scholars lived there and their memories still linger in the place. From here went the great Buddhist Bhikku, Bodhidharma, to China and Korea, where he is still regarded as the most revered teacher from India. To devout Hindus, whether of the North or South, Kanchi is as sacred and sublime a name as Kasi (Benares); and do not the pious throughout the length and breadth of India recite in their daily prayers the names of Maya, Mathura (Muttra), Avantika, Ayodhya, Kasi, Kanchi and Dwaraka?

The Cheras, Cholas and the Pandyas—"The Three Kings", as they were known in the ancient Tamil coun-

try—were powerful rivals to the Pallavas. Members of these three dynasties were contemporaries of Asoka, and they ruled this part of India for unnumbered centuries. History records that their ambassadors were at the courts of the Ceasars and that Greek and Roman traders had their colonies in the ancient cities of South India. Vanchi, near the modern Vanchikulam, was the ancient capital of the Cheras; Oraiyur, near Trichinopoly, was that of the early Cholas, and Madura that of the Pandyas.

The Cholas, like the Pallavas, were great builders and patrons of art and learning. Kulatongan, Karikalan, Cholan Killi, Raja Raja, were some of the most famous names, as wise rulers and great warriors, in South Indian history. The "Big Temple" at Tanjore, built by Raja Raja I, towards the end of the 10th century A.D., is one of the finest architectural monuments in India and a unique temple rising to over 190 feet in height, pyramidal in structure, with a coping stone weighing several tons. The temples at Gangaikondacholapuram, Tribhuvanam and Darasuram were all modelled after this stately structure raised by Raja Raja the Great. The Tanjore temple contains in its innermost *prakaram* fresco paintings of dancing Siva and Parvati; there are in the temple some exquisite bronzes, the most famous of them being the five-foot dancing figure of Nataraja, the most beautiful of its kind. Within the compound is the little shrine of Subramanya, the most perfect example of Dravidian temple architecture.

There are several other temples of great architectural beauty and historic importance scattered about in the Tanjore district, the most notable of them being the Nageswarar temple, with its finely chiselled friezes around the central shrine and its famous Nataraja *murti*, a model for all *stapatis;* the Kumbheswarar temple with its Mahamakham tank; the lofty-towered Sarangapani temple,

dedicated to Vishnu, all three in the town of Kumbakonam; the half-ruined but the most imposing Chola temple at Tiruvadaimaradur, with its innumerable bronze-cast images; the Chola temple at Gangaikondacholapuram, with its lofty *vimanam* and centuries-old bronze statues recovered from the underground cells of the temple; the much ruined but nevertheless most attractive temple at Darasuram; the little known Thillaivilagam shrine with exquisite statues of Rama, Sita and Lakshman; and the greatest and most widely known of all, the temple of the Dancing Siva at Chidambaram, with its high *gopurams, mandapams, sabhas* and tanks.

Chidambaram is "the temple" of South India, where the presiding deity is the Dancing Siva, behind whom is the Holy of Holies, known as *Chit Sabha,* the abode of *Akash.* Four *gopurams* crown the mighty edifice, inside two of which are sculptured the 108 poses of Bharata Natya Sastra; the thousand-pillared hall, 350 by 250 feet, has some excellent dancing figures carved at its basement. The *Nritta Sabha* is one of the beautifully conceived structures inside the temple, which has also some interesting dance poses of Siva. The *Kanaka Sabha* is the golden-domed inner shrine, to reach which you climb five silver-plated steps; the other two, *Deva Sabha* and *Raja Sabha,* complete the five courts inside the temple. Just as Kanchi is associated with the name of Appar, so Chidambaram is associated with Manickavasagar, the poet of Tiruvasakam. Saints like Tirunilakanta Nayanar, Nandan, and Meykanda Thevar; poets like Sekkilar, Arunmoli Thevar and Nambiar Nambi, lived and sanctified the place. Today, a modern university stands not far from this old temple town.

The ancient capital town of the Cholas, Oraiyur, has not any trace of its former glory left but only a memory of its great past. The modern Trichy town has nothing

to boast about except the Rock Fort with its two Pallava sculptured caves and the small shrine of Ganesh at the top of the singularly formed rock-hill. Not far the Cauvery flows encircling in its sweep the island of Srirangam and the temple of Ranganatha, one of the biggest of South Indian temples. Dedicated to Vishnu, this temple is famous in fable and song. All the kings of South India, from the Pallavas to Vijayanagar, have patronised it and donated large estates and costly jewels and presents to it. Sree Ramanuja, the philosopher, and Andal, the saint-singer, have immortalised it in their story and songs. In extent and area it is much larger than that famous Hill of the Holy Beacon, Tiruvannamalai, in South Arcot District, now better known to the world as the *ashram* of Ramana Maharshi.

The road to Kumari is yet long. Of Madura, the Pandya capital, we have had glimpses already. The *gopurams* of the abode of Meenakshi "the fish-eyed Goddess" and the tomb of Mumtaz Mahal are the two most photographed places in India. Less than a hundred miles from Madura is the great shrine of Rameswaram, which is ever crowded with pilgrims from all corners of India. A place associated with the name of Sri Rama, it is dear to the hearts of millions of North Indians. Kasi in the North and Rameswaram in the South are two of the most cosmopolitan temple-towns in India, where Tamils and Bengalis, Gujeratis and Marwaris find a common meeting ground for worship and fellowship. To bathe at Dhanushkodi is as much the lifelong desire of the North Indian as it is the ambition of every pious South Indian to have a dip in the Ganges before he dies. The temple of Rameswaram has, perhaps, the longest and most magnificent perambulating corridors in the world, the whole enclosure being 900 by 700 feet, sculptured elaborately

all through the way. Though of a much later date, its appearance is imposing. The temple jewels, especially the ruby crown and the emerald necklaces, are worth a king's ransom. Almost all the great temples of South India have very valuable old jewels, some of them priceless as works of art and craftsmanship.

The shore temple at Tiruchendur, dedicated to Subramanya and built on a rocky foundation near the sea, is one of the oldest of the Dravidian temples, as it is referred to in Pattupattu, a Tamil classic of the 1st century A.D. Close to the cold dashing waves are to be seen hot springs, which are a great attraction to the pilgrims. The Tirunelvelli temple is not imposing architecturally but contains some fine wood carvings at the entrance. The healing properties of the Courtallam Waterfalls are only equalled by the grandeur of the location of its temple and the beauty of the *Kuravanchi* dance songs composed in praise of Siva enshrined there. Nestling at the foot of mist-covered peaks and roaring waterfalls, the temple attracts thousands of pilgrims and visitors all through the year. A hike up the stream above the waterfalls is a never-to-be-forgotten experience. The thriving town of Tenkasi, where you alight to go to Courtallam, has an old ruined temple which has exquisitely carved, more than life-size, figures of two dancing girls in striking poses, perfect specimens of the stone-cutter's art. It is worth going all the way just to see these two statues.

And thus, after an exhilarating journey through temples, hills and valleys, we arrive at Tiruanantapuram, the modern Trivandrum, in the State of Travancore. This city is not in the plains, though it is at sea level; not on a hill-top, though hilly everywhere; not in a valley, though rich with verdant vegetation, but it sprawls about over the gentle slopes of laterite earth crusts that rise from the sea. The most dominating building is the Sri Padma-

nabha temple, with its unique horizontal *gopuram*, large tank, sculptured *mandapam* and cleanly kept courtyards. The Maharaja of Travancore, who is the servant of Sri Padmanabha, in whose name he rules the state, is a daily worshipper at the temple. The "aurat" or bathing ceremony of Padmanabha is a colourful annual festival in which the ruler leads the procession of the gods accompanied by his troops, state elephants and officers to the sea, three miles away, and after a dip returns to the temple as darkness creeps over the city. Like the Mysore Dasara and the Kandy Perahera, it is a picturesque festival.

The old palaces here are beautiful examples of Malabar architecture in wood, and their unadorned interiors, with their marble-like smooth earthen floors, polished panelled walls, carved doorways and windows are perfect in their simplicity. There is an interesting art gallery, close to the museum, containing representative paintings of modern Indian artists, including some gorgeous Himalayan views by Roerich; the museum itself contains a large number of South Indian bronze pieces, most of them modern faked as old temple images. The Ranga Vilasam palace has a series of striking oil paintings of the old rulers of Travancore with some valuable antiques arranged like a museum. Some of the private houses of the Nairs *(Tarawads)* and the Nambudris *(Illams)* are clean, neat and attractive. A favourite seaside resort is the rock-studded Kovalam, three miles away, with a princess's palace overlooking the beach. The enterprising Dewan, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, has made Travancore a model state by introducing radical reforms in all matters except politics and has also made Trivandrum a show-place in India.

The road to Cape Comorin is no longer dusty. One of the finest cemented roads in all India now runs all the

way to the Cape. Cheap comfortable Government buses ply hourly from the capital to India's land's end all through the day. On the road to Kanyakumari, and not far from the town of Nagarkoil, lies, as if resting from its ancient activity and splendour, the fortified city of Padmanabhapuram, the old capital of Travancore. Enclosed within its massive walls and in the heart of this slumbering citadel is the royal residence of the past rulers. This palace, in spite of its ruined appearance and signs of decay, is beautifully situated at the foot of the tail-end of the Western Ghats and has some interesting architectural features. In its general outlook, it reminds one of the world-famous Angkor Vat in Cambodia: the same style of corridors, the same type of roofs, the same lathed windows, the same converging lines towards a central pyramidal structure; the only difference being that this is built of wood and was a palace while the other is of hard stone and was a temple.

The central building is three storeyed, each storey contains numerous corridors and carved galleries; the royal bedroom on the topmost floor contains well-preserved mural paintings of the 18th century, mostly of a religious character. Some excellent wood-carvings are to be seen in an adjoining wooden structure known as Nirpura, a bathing place for royal ladies. Thanks to Dr. J. H. Cousins, the whole palace is now well preserved, and a small local museum contains fragments of stone sculptures found round about the place.

The temple at Suchindram, three miles from the Cape, rivals in beauty, sanctity and sculptural wealth any of the famous temples in India. Its lofty seven-storeyed *gopuram* is a majestic structure, which still contains some faded frescoes; its inner *prakarams* contain several big masterpieces in stone carving, including rows of large standing *deepalakshmis* all along the corridors;

a lovely tank, graced by a *vimana-mandapam* in the middle of it, completes the beauty of the place.

The sea-girt and rock-bound shrine of the Virgin Goddess, Kanyakumari, stands like a solitary sentinel by the shimmering sapphire sea. No graceful *gopuram* or stately structure catches the eye; no town or even hamlet of any consequence is there. The temple is indistinguishable from the rest of the walled buildings that are used as free lodging places by visitors. The small *mandapam*, near the bathing place, affords shelter from sun and rain; the chained-off pool of water between the rocks is used as a safe bathing ghat. The adventurous ones venture out beyond it for real sea bathing and to be dashed about by the waves. To the west of the temple lie the rest houses and a commodious modern hotel for tourists. For the tired traveller it is a haven of rest and an ideal place to greet both the sunrise and sunset from one's own bedroom. On the beach shine rainbow-coloured pebbles and sands, and sea-shells of all sorts can be had for the mere asking.

And so this is Kanyakumari, you say to yourself, as you stand on this extreme tip of India's land, facing south, taking in a deep breath of the cool breeze blowing from the sea. Here meet three oceans, washing the sacred feet of Mother India and chanting her praises with their eternally murmuring waves; here ends the last of the shrines of this land of Temples; here is the tiny spot in this vast sub-continent which moves even the most sceptical person to a feeling of reverence and devotion to the land of his birth. What is this love for one's own country? Is it a mere sentiment? Why should this sandy waste at the extreme end of India, which has no other religious or cultural association worth remembering, evoke such profound feelings in an Indian as he stands and gazes towards the vast expanse of the Indian

Ocean? Feelings cannot be rationalised and need not be. It is enough to know that here at Kanyakumari one feels bigger than one's normal self and that even a desert can evoke religious fervour in one's being.

NALANDA PUBLICATIONS
SIR PHIROZSHAH MEHTA ROAD, BOMBAY 1.